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THE AIM OF THIS COMMENTARY is to bring out the religious meaning and message of the New Testament writings. The New Testament was the literature of the early church, written out of faith and for faith, and no study of it is intelligent unless this aim is kept in mind. It is literature written for a religious purpose.

THE IDEA OF THE COMMENTARY arose from a repeated demand to have Moffatt's New Testament translation explained, and this translation has been adopted as a convenient basis for the Commentary. But the contributors have been left free to take their own way. If they interpret the text differently, they have been at liberty to do so.

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The
MOFFATT
NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

Based on *The New Translation* by the
REV. PROFESSOR JAMES MOFFATT, D.D.
and under his Editorship

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

The Moffatt
New Testament Commentary

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THE FIRST EPISTLE OF
PAUL
TO THE CORINTHIANS

BY

JAMES MOFFATT

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

MOFFATT'S NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY

The aim of this commentary is to bring out the religious meaning and message of the New Testament writings. To do this, it is needful to explain what they originally meant for the communities to which they were addressed in the first century, and this involves literary and historical criticism; otherwise, our reading becomes unintelligent. But the New Testament was the literature of the early Church, written out of faith and for faith, and no study of it is intelligent unless this aim is kept in mind. It is literature written for a religious purpose. 'These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.' This is the real object of the New Testament, that Christians might believe it better, in the light of contemporary life with its intellectual and moral problems. So with any commentary upon it. Everything ought to be subordinated to the aim of elucidating the religious content, of showing how the faith was held in such and such a way by the first Christians, and of making clear what that faith was and is.

The idea of the commentary arose from a repeated demand to have my New Testament translation explained; which accounts for the fact that this translation has been adopted as a convenient basis for the commentary. But the contributors have been left free to take their own way. If they interpret the text differently, they have been at liberty to say so. Only, as a translation is in itself a partial commentary, it has often saved space to print the commentary and start from it.

As everyman has not Greek, the commentary has been written, as far as possible, for the Greekless. But it is based upon a first-hand study of the Greek original, and readers may rest assured that it represents a close reproduction of the original writers' meaning, or at any rate of what we consider that to have been. Our common aim has been to enable everyman to-day to sit where these first Christians sat, to feel the impetus and inspiration of the Christian faith

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as it dawned upon the minds of the communities in the first century, and thereby to realize more vividly how new and lasting is the message which prompted these New Testament writings to take shape as they did. Sometimes people inside as well as outside the Church make mistakes about the New Testament. They think it means this or that, whereas its words frequently mean something very different from what traditional associations suggest. The saving thing is to let the New Testament speak for itself. This is our desire and plan in the present commentary, to place each writing or group of writings in its original setting, and allow their words to come home thus to the imagination and conscience of everyman to-day.

The general form of the commentary is to provide a running comment on the text, instead of one broken up into separate verses. But within these limits, each contributor has been left free. Thus, to comment on a gospel requires a method which is not precisely the same as that necessitated by commenting on an epistle. Still, the variety of treatment ought not to interfere with the uniformity of aim and form. Our principle has been that nothing mattered, so long as the reader could understand what he was reading in the text of the New Testament.

JAMES MOFFATT.

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INTRODUCTION

I. WHEN AND WHY THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN

WHEN Paul travelled west from Athens to Corinth in A.D. 50, by land or sea, he reached the capital of Achaia, the province which lay south of Macedonia. Ever since he had landed at Athens he had been in Achaia, but his stay at Athens had been no more than an interlude ; as usual he pushed forward to the leading city, an industrial centre and trade depot of commanding importance. There he, who happens never to mention the word ' friend,' made one of his closest friendships. His trade brought him into touch with a couple of Jewish Christians who had been recently ejected from Rome by an imperial edict of Claudius. Aquila and Priscilla had a house or lodgings of their own, where Paul lived with them. **They all worked together,** Luke reports. But it was not simply at the leather trade. They were drawn into work of propaganda in connexion with the local synagogue. Whether Paul had originally gone to Corinth with some idea of returning to the churches of Macedonia, about which he was deeply concerned, or whether he had intended to do mission-work, an opening presented itself of which he took advantage. According to the Western text of Acts xviii. 4 (' he argued in the synagogue, persuading both Jews and Greeks '), the apostle *entering the synagogue every sabbath held argument, introducing the name of Jesus and persuading not only Jews but Greeks.* This may or may not be the original text, but it represents what he actually did. He introduced the name and message of Jesus as Lord or messiah to the local Jews ; to their exasperation, he drew off some of the circumcised as well as a number of proselytes and others on the fringe of the synagogue. He was not merely a renegade Pharisee who believed in messiah, but a successful one, aided now by Silas and Timotheus as well as by his host and hostess. Luke marks two stages in the mission ; a break with the synagogue was followed by a renewed appeal which proved most effective among the proletariate (1 Cor. i. 26 f.). Apparently the majority of the converts were pagan by birth (xii. 2), whether they were proselytes or not. The result was that when he left, in the spring of A.D. 52, after a residence of less than two years, a strong church had been formed at Corinth and in the neighbourhood. Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him to Ephesus. But his work at Corinth was soon carried forward by a distinguished successor. This was a cultured recruit from Alexandria, a Jewish Christian called Apollos, who had come across Aquila and Priscilla at Ephesus. **Strong in the knowledge of the scriptures** already, he was instructed by them on the lines of Paul's teaching. Hurrying across to Corinth, he reinforced the local Christians by his fresh and formidable messianic preaching; in opposition to the synagogue **he publicly refuted the Jews with might and main, showing from the scriptures that the messiah was Jesus.** Thus Luke describes his mission, which developed inside the church the teaching and traditions of Paul himself, probably making a more extensive use of the allegorical interpretation than the apostle had had time or occasion to do. For what followed, we have only the apostle's correspondence with the church to fall back upon. Luke was not interested in the internal affairs of any church within the Pauline mission.

The situation which emerged after Apollos left is outlined in the introduction to Second Corinthians in our Commentary. It had become so serious that Paul had to intervene by sending a peremptory letter—which has not been preserved (though one fragment from it is imbedded in 2 Cor. vi. 14–vii. 1)—warning the local Christians against compromise with the world. Neither then nor afterwards had he occasion to fear any serious challenge from mystery-cults at Corinth. Unlike the church at Thessalonica, the Corinthians were also free from interference at the hands of pagans; their relations with the authorities were smooth, and the strong control of a proconsul like Gallio prevented the Jews from disturbing the peace of Christians in Achaia as they had done in Macedonia. Indeed it was this very privilege of undisturbed life which had fostered the real trouble. As yet there was no internal controversy over the Law, such as had vexed the Galatian church; if any group at Corinth shared the stricter views of Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, it was not they who caused friction when Paul wrote his ' first ' letter or even the First Epistle. But from Apollos and others he had learned that there was what he considered a dangerous friendliness between the church and the world, a tendency on the part of some members to make the break with pagan society as indefinite as possible and to ignore the distinctiveness of Christianity in practice if not in principle. The Church was in the world, as it had to be, but the world was in the Church, as it ought not to be.

Instead of arresting this movement, the ' first ' letter was misinterpreted as too severe; it proved ineffective (1 Cor. v. 9). The next stage in the relations betweeen the apostle and his church was marked by the despatch of a fresh, more elaborate, letter, which is our canonical First Corinthians, written, like the ' first,' out of the busy mission which engaged him around Ephesus, not earlier than 55 and not later than 57.

He had been handed a communication from the church itself, brought over by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, who were visiting Ephesus on a business tour. Paul wrote many letters and may have received a number, but this happens to be the only recorded case of one being actually conveyed to him. The Corinthians had written, protesting effusively that they were **always bearing him in mind and maintaining the traditions** which he had **passed on** to them for faith and order. But were not his rules about unworldliness really too stringent ? They hinted that it was surely impracticable to **avoid contact** with immoral people in business and pleasure ; they had to **associate with** such persons, unless they were to **leave the world altogether.** Furthermore, they consulted him on two problems of social conduct—marriage and the use of sacrificial food ; opinion varied on these issues, and he was asked to give his ruling. A third difficulty had emerged since he left, viz. the ordering of public worship, especially with regard to the place claimed by or for women in the service, and also the handling of those who took part in prophesying.

Would he give them some directions on these matters as well as on the fund which they were expected to raise for the starving Christians in Judea? On the discreditable **party-cries** and **quarrelling,** as well as on a recent case of incest, they said not a word, but assured him that the building up of the church was going on steadily in his absence; they hoped that, if he was still going to disappoint them by not **coming** back **himself, brother Apollos** might pay them a return visit to carry on his delightful mission. Meantime he would be glad to know how happy they all were; they had **come into their kingdom,** they had their **heart's desire,** a **wealth of blessing** and religious experience; **heaven's rich bliss** was theirs, thanks to the wonderful variety of **spiritual endowments** which God had **bestowed** upon them! In fact they were having a good time.

But their apostle had private information about the real state of affairs from the three local deputies as well as from some Achaian Christians, called **Chloe's people,** who reported that his own apostolic credentials had been questioned by some self-constituted **inquisitors,** till it was openly held in certain quarters that he was **no** regular **apostle.** His work was belittled, owing to the influence of a group from Jerusalem or Antioch, who had arrived at Corinth, either in the ordinary course of propaganda or as a counter-mission, unsettling the local church. It is to reports of this that he alludes in iv. 18, v. 1, ix. 3, xi. 18, and xv. 12, as well as in i. 11. From what he learned about the inside situation, he was able not only to handle the four questions put to him by the church (vii, viii, xii, xvi. 1), but to drive some other matters home to their conscience with apostolic authority and affectionate remonstrances. In fact the opening section (i.–iv., v.–vi.) is entirely devoted to very serious subjects on which the Corinthians had not asked his opinion; so is the final counsel on the resurrection (xv.). The bulk of his reply to their actual letter lies between these.

The situation was by this time so critical that, unable to leave his mission in Asia at the moment, he sat down to dictate this letter, which would reach them before his deputy, Timotheus, arrived. It is the longest that he ever wrote—in some respects the most varied and versatile. None other reflects such a medley of the topics and problems apt to be raised within a church of the primitive period which was facing the social environment of paganism, and also such a ferment of the new faith among converts drawn from Roman and Greek civilization, whose minds were affected by inherited tendencies of superstition and fervour.

II. For Whom the Epistle was Written

Corinth was cosmopolitan, in the popular sense of the term. Greeks, Latins, Syrians, Asiatics, Egyptians, and Jews, bought and sold, laboured and revelled, quarrelled and hob-nobbed, in the city and its ports, as nowhere else in Greece. By this time it had the largest and most heterogeneous population to be found in any Greek province. But the primary characteristic of the place had been its Roman ethos. After the disastrous fire in 146 B.C., the new Corinth—that is, the Corinth which had been refounded by Julius Cæsar as a colony less than a century before Paul wrote—was peopled by settlers from Italy, most of whom belonged to the freedman class. In political sympathies and municipal organization the city was more Roman than Greek ; there was little pure Greek blood in the first generation of the Corinthians. When Paul arrived, however, the majority were sharp, clever Levantines. While they still had more in common with Roman traditions of civic polity and even of social life than with Hellenistic, they were Greeks, living in a city through which trade poured from East to West, its harbours crowded with merchantmen from the Ægean and the Adriatic. They were proud of the place, proud of its games held every other year at the Isthmus (ix. 24 f., xv. 55) under the patronage of the sea-god, proud, above all, of its Greek heroes and heroines. Did not the local sights include two famous tombs, one of Diogenes the Stoic, or rather the Cynic, leader, and the other of Lais the handsome courtesan ? Corinthians prided themselves on their city's commercial importance, on the distinguished travellers who would stop there as they passed through, and on its popularity as a resort. The proverb ran: ‘It is not given to everyone to visit Corinth.’ Significantly enough, this was originally a Mediterranean shipmaster’s sigh of envy or of satisfaction. Not every captain was lucky enough to be sent on a voyage to Corinth with its ample provision of harlots! By the time Paul visited Corinth, the splendid temple of Aphrodite had not been re-erected, but the cult flourished round the docks and in several of the shrines. Love and licentiousness formed an alloy, which, like the equally famous Corinthian bronze, was exported as well as enjoyed locally. Every Greek knew what a ‘Corinthian girl’ meant. On the Isthmus itself thousands of the citizens and tourists worshipped Aphrodite as the goddess of common, not celestial, love, or as the Syrian Astarte. Yet Venus was primarily popular at Corinth as the goddess and patroness of the Julian family, to which Cæsar belonged, and to which aristocratic citizens looked back still with patriotic gratitude. This counted in some circles for almost as much as her erotic aspect, and certainly for more than her cosmic halo in some of the later Orphic hymns. It was the Egyptian Isis who was the pagan madonna, not Venus. The official cult of the latter belonged to the persistent Latin tradition, like the institution of the *septemviri epulonum*, or Board of Seven Festal Officials, who were responsible for arranging sacred feasts in honour of Jupiter. Corinth had its augurs, its flamens, and other officials of the Latin type for imperial festivals, which were so popular that some local Christians disliked the demand of Paul and the stricter party in the church that they should give up attending such celebrations or similar civic festivals in the temples of gods like Neptune or Mercury, the god of commerce. The affinity between Corinth and its homeland appears in art, architecture, coinage, and, above all, in the city’s passion, unique in Greece, for the bloody games of the amphitheatre, where, like Romans on a holiday, the populace delighted to watch gladiators in deadly combat, after a matinée at which condemned criminals had been set to fight with wild beasts in the arena (iv. 9, xv. 32). So devoted were the citizens to this amusement that they took the lead in erecting for themselves stone amphitheatres, the cost of which was levied on other towns in the province. The Forum was adorned by statues of Roman emperors, in Latin garb, by statues of Minerva and Neptune, and by the dominating temple in honour of Octavia, the sister of Augustus. Recently it had been a Latin governor of Corinth who organized the popular worship of the emperor, with attractive games and sacrifices, and among the statues was one of Fortuna, the Roman deity, in Parian marble, as at Rome. Of the inscriptions from Corinth during the first century, the large majority are in Latin, which was the official language of the governing authorities. Owing to this Roman tradition, it is no wonder that Christians who had been turned out of Rome, like Aquila and Priscilla, should cast up at Corinth, where there was so much in common with the capital, especially if Aquila was a Roman freedman. A number of the special allusions and pleas in this very letter (e.g. ix. 6, x. 25, xi. 3, xii. 12 f., xiv. 34, 40, xvi. 20) are not simply due to the fact that the writer was a Roman citizen. He had not lived and worked at Corinth without being quick to understand the local affinities of the citizens with the city on the Tiber. The tone and even the language of his appeals often presuppose familiarity on the part of his readers with popular missioners of Stoicism at Rome, some of whom visited Corinth itself, in the course of their far-flung propaganda for moral reformation.

The bulk of the Church's membership was drawn from the lower classes—from dockyards, potteries, and brass-foundries, from poor shopkeepers, bakers, brokers, fullers, and stray waifs in the motley crowds of Corinth. It included slaves as well as freemen (xii. 13). Yet, as the scum was not confined to the slums, neither is it to be assumed that a slave was necessarily a menial drudge. As a prisoner of war, for example, he might be better born and more highly educated than his master or mistress. The term slave covered not only farm-workers, labourers, and domestic servants, but secretaries, accountants, librarians, estate-managers, physicians, and clerks, who were far from brainless serfs. While not many intellectuals or leading citizens from the villas of Corinth belonged to the community at the start (i. 26), however, it is remarkable that some of the questions raised by the church, and the regulations which Paul had to lay down, imply free-born citizens of social position, who frequented law-courts and private banquets. The moral situations raised by marriage, again, did not directly affect slaves. Neither did some of the issues started by business and pleasure, though slaves were not wholly excluded from such spheres. Paul does turn aside at one point to discuss the position of Christian slaves, but apparently the problems of behaviour belong, upon the whole, to life among the free-born or householders, not among the poor and lower slave-class. Furthermore, if the apostle found most trouble in this quarter, he had also admirable support among business people and the better educated ; men such as Crispus and Gaius, Stephanas, Titus Justus, and a municipal official like Erastus, as well as women of social position like Chloe and Phœbe, were a steadying influence which he welcomed and encouraged. It is also possible that some Roman Christians of experience had accompanied Aquila and his wife to Corinth, where they would rally to the side of Paul.

At the same time the undue regard for philosophy or 'wisdom,' and the dissatisfaction with Paul's evangelical and (it was thought) rather crude presentation of the gospel, are not to be hastily identified with any temper of this more intelligent or independent class in the church. Such a spirit in any age prevails among more than the intellectuals ; it is not confined to the upper ranks or the middle class. Party spirit, a love for advanced views, fickleness, and the desire for unlimited self-expression, which were rampant at Corinth, are weeds that flourish on the lower as well as on the higher levels of mankind ; a dock labourer or a slave might be as quick-witted, insolent, and obsessed with a sense of mental superiority, as any really educated and respectable member of the local church. The records of contemporary Stoicism at Rome on this point offer a suggestive parallel to what must have been the case of the church at Corinth. It was not necessarily the wise or rich or influential who were proud ; nor, again, is it to be assumed that the poorer members constituted the unsuspicious and considerate nucleus of the community. We can read between the lines of the letter, to discover that class distinctions as such were not the dividing line between the showy and the solid members of the Church.

In the religious societies, or associations called *collegia tenuiorum*, slaves had opportunities of social fellowship with fellow-slaves, and even with free people, which did much to meet the need for human intercourse and gave them a sense of self-respect. They might also belong to confraternities or private religious associations, where they dined together, held funerals for their members, and enjoyed common ties under the ægis of some foreign god or goddess, since most slaves belonged to one or other of the imported Eastern cults. None was more popular than that of Isis. This impressive religious movement had a strong attraction for women, who enjoyed there a sort of religious equality with men (xi. 16) which was not extended by the synagogue ; but it also had the merit of embracing slaves as well as the lowly born in its fellowship. There are even cases of slaves, male and female, acting in their spare moments as priests and priestesses of such a cult ; though this did not necessarily mean more than competence to perform the requisite ritual, it signified a recognition of them as persons, such as was denied them by Roman Law. The difficulties discussed by Paul in connexion with social feasts of semi-religious associations and clubs at Corinth were not confined to Christians who belonged to the better classes, any more than the vices pilloried in v. 10 f., vi. 9 f. were characteristic of the proletariate alone in Levantine sea-ports like that of Cenchreæ or of Lechæum at Corinth. The amusing, unedifying book of Petronius, written not long after this epistle, reveals such practices and habits among the freeborn and wealthy as well. Even when 'Corinthian' passed into English as an equivalent for shameless or licentious, or indeed for both together, it meant the so-called upper class as well as the riff-raff.

The problem which required special discussion in connexion with slaves who belonged to the local church was that of freedom (vii. 21 f.). A slave might be manumitted by a provision in the will of his master, which took effect at the latter's death; or he might be set free by a grateful master for some particular service rendered; or, again, he might be liberated by an owner who found it less expensive to free him than to provide for him. He might, further, buy his freedom. It was well known that a slave might find himself less well off, so far as income went, if he did achieve freedom in some such way. But as a rule the slave desired to be manumitted, and the new consciousness of personality which was aroused by his Christian faith sharpened this instinct. Such is the situation with which Paul has to deal, though from the religious side, not from the economic.

The sole trace of social distinctions occurred in worship. It does not seem to have been connected with any of the cliques or parties in the church (i. 10 f.), which probably drew upon all members, slave and free. But the re-union of the love-feast, by its very form of social intercourse at table, had fostered some class feeling; evidently there was a tendency on the part of the better-class members to draw apart from their humbler fellow Christians. Suburbanites did not always mix easily with metal-workers or potters or ragged boatmen. Again, Paul treats this as a religious matter, not as offensive or rude behaviour alone; it is disrespectful **to the church of God.** That is, the offence is judged in the light of the distinctive position of the Corinthians to whom the letter is addressed, **all** of them **called to be saints** in a corporation where social differences did not count. Since the days of Isaiah, the **saints,** as the saving (or rather the saved) remnant, had become an apocalyptic term for the core of the messianic community in the latter days, chosen and set apart by God, right with him, in a sacred fellowship of hope and duty. It is this high consciousness to which Paul summons the Corinthians one and all, at point after point of the present letter, as the determining consideration, whether for warning or for encouragement. The line of God's revelation had now passed beyond Judaism to those whom God had **consecrated** no longer through the Torah, but **in Christ Jesus.** Here lay the real collective satisfaction which some Corinthians had sought in the international fellowships of the mystery cults, with their demand for a kind of purity which was the condition of bliss with God here and hereafter, a sanctity open to all ranks and peoples. It is one service of this epistle that it throws light on the deeper significance which Christianity attached to religious terms like 'purity,' 'holiness,' 'devotion to the Lord,' 'knowledge,' 'freedom,' and also 'fellowship,' which were already current in paganism and Judaism at Corinth. But most significant in this connexion is the stress on the corporate fellowship of the Church as catholic; the Corinthians are summoned, whatever their local or social position might be, to recollect that they are **called to be saints** together 'with all that call upon Jesus Christ our Lord in every place.' So far from this denoting separatists who worshipped in groups outside the local church, it echoes the conviction behind an inscription sometimes placed over a synagogue, 'Peace be to this place and to all places of Israel.' Here, Paul would say, is the true cosmopolitanism. Here, also, is the one focus for understanding the implications of the Christian hope and its responsibilities, in their most local settings. The epistle is written for people who in various ways were in danger of forgetting this focus.

Of the two types of worship services, the love-feast, with its very primitive form of what was later the eucharist, would not be unfamiliar to Corinthians acquainted with similar re-unions in religious cults and associations of the city. The more general service of the Word corresponded to the synagogal precedent with its stress on religious instruction. At this period, especially outside Palestine, the synagogue was a school of religion, as Philo explained, where people were taught how to obey the Torah in practical life; education was the most prominent feature of worship at a synagogue. Rightly or wrongly, at Corinth it was still the ministry of the Word (Acts vi. 2–4, Heb. xiii. 7, etc.) by inspired apostles, prophets, teachers, and catechists, not sacramental rites, which formed the invigorating and authoritative service of worship. The church met to hear and understand this Word (xiv. 36), which bound them to God and to one another. At such a gathering the present epistle was designed to be read aloud, as an apostle's absent sermon. Like the other lessons and addresses, it was designed to further the common prayers and praises of the worship as well as to give direction and guidance. The central pulse of the whole service beat in spoken word and testimony upon the distinctive, divine mysteries of the gospel (xiv. 19) which the love-feast represented realistically as a symbol of fellowship. While both provided solemn and thrilling experiences of the Spirit, the former gave ampler scope for the exercise of spiritual gifts (xii, xiv.) and served as a sacred convocation for such purposes as charity and discipline (v. 3 f., 12–13).

III. How the Epistle was Composed

Except for a marginal note (xv. 56), and a brief paragraph in xiv. 33–36, there is nothing to suggest that any part of the letter did not come from the hand, or rather from the mind, of Paul himself. But it is not so certain that the writing, as we have it, corresponds exactly to its form in the papyrus which was preserved in the archives of the Corinthian church. At first sight it is natural to infer from the data of Second Corinthians that First Corinthians may have been also editorially arranged out of some earlier correspondence. It cannot be denied that more than once the text has the appearance of being broken, as though something were left out. Different situations have been suspected in iv. 18 f. and xvi. 5 f., in i. 10 f. and xi. 18 f. Difficulties have been felt about the connexion, or the lack of connexion, between certain sections; thus the ninth chapter might stand apart, or it might follow iv. 21, if not x. 1–22 as a parenthesis, whilst x. 22 f. would be a fair sequel to the eighth chapter, it is argued. Furthermore, may not vi. 12–20, vii. 17–24, x. 1–22, and xi. 2–34 have originally belonged to the 'first' letter, like 2 Cor. vi. 14–vii. 1? Ingenious attempts have been made to reconstruct two or even three letters out of which our canonical epistle is supposed to have been put together by the editor of the whole correspondence. But even those which are most ably stated by Dr. Johannes Weiss in his edition, and in his *History of Primitive*

Christianity, or by Professor Maurice Goguel, in his *Introduction au Nouveau Testament*, are not quite convincing. From the literary point of view it is essential to bear in mind that the letter is not a cool discussion of Christian principles about faith and ethics and worship, but written out of a pressing, shifting situation. This is reflected in its very style, which is often the rapid, viva-voce method of the contemporary diatribe or discussion, where the writer, for example, cites some word of an opponent or objector, only to refute it. He speaks as if he were taking part in their worship, turning from one to another group or section. First Corinthians has no fewer than ninety-six questions, some in citations, many rhetorical. It is as though the apostle dictated with a vivid sense of having his hearers before him. The rhythmical, sustained style is frequently interrupted by eager, short sentences, like those of a preacher addressing an audience, and this is more marked than in any of Paul's earlier letters, even more marked than in Galatians. The literary characteristics point to an unusually direct and varied situation, not only at Corinth, but in the circumstances of the apostle himself. When he came to write Romans, evidently he had more leisure (if one can ever speak of Paul being at leisure), and at the same time far less urgent responsibilities for the church he was addressing. The fact is, First Corinthians is not a detached religious essay, composed at a sitting. Probably it took days and even weeks to write the letter, and at Corinth the situation was changing, as he heard from Corinthians who turned up with the latest news of a church which seemed to be breaking up, or at any rate breaking away from apostolic control. Besides, in Ephesus, or wherever he was in the Asiatic province, Paul at this period had **the care of all the churches** pressing on him with special weight. He was busy, surrounded by difficulties and duties of his mission in the neighbourhood, moving from place to place, probably with little time to himself, as he endeavoured to snatch time for dictating a responsible message overseas on a multifarious set of issues. From a letter written amid incessant distractions, one should not expect the logical coherence of a treatise. It is astonishing indeed how much concentration of mind there is, upon essential and applied Christianity, as he moves from point to point. Yet, between what we read in one passage after another, intervals would occur, interruptions and practical upsets. Furthermore it is not his way in this letter to exhaust a subject always when he handles it. Now and then he will come back to it in the light of fresh information, or after further reflection, approaching it from another side, just as he is sometimes carried away by pastoral concern as well as by artistic sense to develop an argument or an allusion on lines which do not seem to be relevant and yet are never far from his central purpose. In the light of such considerations, it is not natural to suppose, for example, that because once for all he took a severe, puritanic line, as in the ' first ' letter, therefore any passage in the canonical First Epistle which breathes the same spirit must have belonged to the earlier communication. The Corinthians needed such admonitions still. Paul knew better than to imagine that one telling would do.

Whether such factors are sufficient to account for all the data, without straining the evidence, is an open question. One case of transposition seems likely (at xiv. 33). Elsewhere matter may have been dropped, by accident or design, though it is remarkable how many pungent passages were retained, as too precious to be lost. But if some editor really put together fragments from two or three letters, he has done his work so well that it is beyond our powers to recover their original shape and sequence. Though such an hypothesis cannot be ruled out, though, indeed, at some points it becomes an attractive solution of apparent contradictions and inconsequences in the existing letter, it is not absolutely demanded, not even by the swift turn of a passage like iv. 7 f., vii. 18 f., or x. 23 f., much less by the suddenness of the rhapsody in xiii. We can only guess at what happened when the letters were edited for the original collection of Paul's epistles at Corinth or elsewhere. But even if the correspondence with Corinth was in almost as disorderly a condition as the church itself had been, one may conclude, not unfairly, that the present order of First Corinthians at any rate is on the whole as likely to be Paul's as editorial.

IV. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EPISTLE

In one aspect this document marks the beginning of Christian 'casuistry' in the true sense of that term, i.e. the application of Christian principles to special cases and particular problems arising out of private life and Church situations, such as sex, social ties, discipline, and worship. Not that Paul's counsels were all improvised for the first time, as he dictated the letter. Now and then we get a pungent impromptu, but the general contents rather reveal him doing what he had already done for the church, to some extent, as a responsible rabbi might have done for a Jewish community. In his capacity as an apostle he gave *haggada*, or edifying expositions of Scripture, applying the Greek Bible to present-day life (as in x. 1–11); also he laid down *halacha*, or directions for conduct (see on iv. 17). Such methods, 'ways,' or traditions, he had imparted to the mission before he left. Nothing is more unhistorical than to imagine a contrast within the primitive Church between the Spirit and traditions. The latter originally sprang from the living inheritance and oral revelations of the Spirit, and they were essential if the community was not to collapse, especially a community whose charismatic ministry was still so one-sided; rules by way of directions from the sayings of Jesus, simple catechetical statements about his life as messianic and the apostolic missions which he had authorized (ix. 14), counsels for prayer and practice, and regulations upon duty and devotion, were passed on, to be treasured in the retentive Oriental memory, practised in the simple and distinctive rites of worship, and reinforced by local prophets and teachers at the weekly gathering. Paul, who never speaks of Christianity as 'the Way,' speaks of his own 'ways' or regulations (iv. 17) in connexion with Christ Jesus, since Christ was the equivalent of the Torah or divine Law for the Church. As an ordained presbyter or elder of some local Sanhedrim interpreted the Torah, in carrying out his function of ruling the congregation, so apostles, prophets, preachers, and teachers interpreted their new revelation of the divine will in Christ Jesus for his saints, instead of leaving them to warm impulses and casual, vague memories. Even a *thiasus*, or religious association, open to anyone who cared to join, on payment of an entrance fee, had its articles and by-laws which were enforced by the officials. So with the Church. All that was implied in the baptismal confession (xii. 3), 'Jesus is Lord,' had to be brought out, applied, and expounded, by responsible authorities, for training in the sacred community and service. In this letter it is generally the moral issues of such a distinctive fellowship and worship that emerge from point to point. A church was not a voluntary association ; it was composed of the **called**, and God's call was a rule for the corporation. As it happens, we know more of Paul's relations with the Corinthian church than with any other of his missions, and, although some of the difficulties were local, and the organization very elementary and undeveloped, his method of treating them was typical of an apostle with evangelic traditions of the new Christian rule for life. We find him either reminding the church of traditions which they had forgotten or developing Christian truth for them on the same lines of religious authority, pleading for their intelligent agreement, appealing to their deeper convictions of the Spirit, and rebuking their waywardness, as well as demanding now and then their submission to the catholic, apostolic tradition of the faith.

One result of this situation is that the letter is less comprehensive and less absorbed in general Christian ideas than the letter to the Roman Christians. Here Paul has to do with a church of his own planting, beset by local risks which partly determine not only the choice of subjects, but their very treatment. On the other hand, this serves to make the letter specially valuable for the light which it throws upon continuity and unity as essential to a church surging with supernatural energy on unaccustomed lines. Left to itself, without any regulative principles of the new Spirit for discipline and devotion, such a surge was in danger of running into bogs and sands. Only by freshly and fully adhering to the traditions, could these enthusiastic Christians keep within the safe channel for reaching the haven of their cherished hope. Hence the emphasis upon the Church as the fellowship which was at once heir to the earlier promises of God, fulfilled in Christ, and also a distinctive, corporate community in the religious world.

The presentation of such a topic was naturally determined by local emergencies. Paul's aim is to make the Corinthians more conscious of their identity as a church, and of what this meant. Faith must be free; that is the assumption of his argument. Even seething vitality, with splash after splash of exuberant independence, is welcome to him as proof of the Spirit moving in the community. Thus, in a real sense, the letter comes to be occupied with the same theme as the Galatian letter. Only, it is the liberty of Christians viewed from another angle. In Galatians Paul had to reaffirm the freedom of faith against restrictions of a reactionary tendency. Naturally he had to balance this emphasis with a warning against the liberty that slips into licence, but in First Corinthians it is chiefly the latter danger that is uppermost, though, as it happens, he hardly mentions freedom. Here he has to contend that the freedom of Christianity can be enjoyed only in fellowship. At Corinth he found that the very advocates of liberty were proving its worst enemies. There was a feminist movement, for example, of which he was more than doubtful, an ultra-ascetic movement with untoward claims to a freedom from moral restraints and to a sinister combination of low living and high thinking, a self-assertive movement even in worship and Church work, and a general tendency on the part of enlightened Christians to identify freedom with the right of individuals to take their own line and press their own opinions, as well as, on the part of the local church, to hold aloof from any corporate consciousness of Christendom in the great world. In handling such problems Paul has occasion to state the essentials of personal and congregational liberty as a responsibility no less than as a privilege. The fire and penetration with which he does all this make the letter a religious classic. Still, the dominant note is struck in his warnings to more or less well-meaning Christians who, in his judgement, were compromising and even caricaturing the vital spirit of liberty.

While these warnings are charged with positive principles, and while they are accompanied by repeated reassurances of his unabated confidence in the church, they protest so sharply against local Christians not only falling out with one another, but falling apart from the general body of Christendom, that they sound almost ominous, especially in the light of what happened soon after this letter was received. It might seem, on reading the whole Corinthian correspondence, that Paul's mission at Corinth had been wrecked. But it was not so (p. 176). Doubtless, during the next generation, partisan feeling again led to trouble ; some of the senior presbyters had been deposed hastily, and the neighbouring church at Rome affectionately remonstrated with the Christian group in a place like Corinth, to which the capital of the empire was so closely affiliated by civic tradition. Clement, who wrote on behalf of the Roman Christians, was himself a local official or presbyter, for, like the church of Corinth, the church at Rome had no single bishop till nearly seventy years after Paul wrote. Clement's epistle reflects a serious concern about divisiveness at Corinth. Yet by this time the organization was stronger ; the church was consolidated under episcopal presbyters, who eventually took the situation in hand. At Corinth, indeed, the church now counted for more than the synagogue ever did. In the reign of Marcus Aurelius, Corinth had one of the leading bishops in the East, the distinguished Dionysius, whose pastoral letters were a feature of the age. So that, in spite of the incipient insubordination during the first century, it is plain that the basis of the church had been firmly laid. Paul's claim was justified—that he had **laid the foundation** of God's house at Corinth **like an expert master-builder** ; his original work, as revealed in this letter, was not upset by the storms of misunderstanding, detraction, and intrigue that beat upon its walls.

No epistle of his was actually read so early and quoted so widely as this, for direction on true belief and behaviour as well as on Church order and worship. Clement knew it well. So did Ignatius of Antioch. In some quarters it was evidently first on the list of the apostle's letters during the second century ; Tertullian and Cyprian in North Africa, Origen in Alexandria, and bishop Hippolytus at Rome (if he wrote what is known as the Muratorian canon), all attest this. Our first impression may be that Paul was 'leaving great' prose 'unto a little clan,' little not merely in numbers but in the capacity of appreciating the superb gift which came to them in the papyrus roll of First Corinthians. Yet the letter exercised among them, as well as far beyond them, a profound influence. Even in circles where Peter was more revered, Paul's apostolic precedent was gladly welcomed by those who were organizing Church rules, and Christians who differed from the main Church did not hesitate to appeal to sentences of this letter on behalf of ideas and practices of their own, so many sides of practical Christianity did it touch for the first time and with masterly decision.

In this letter we see Paul introducing and developing terms like 'spiritual,' 'conscience,' 'knowledge,' 'mystery,' 'ministry' or service, 'preaching,' and 'heresy,' in the vocabulary of the Christian faith, all of them in the light of the new religious realities which he had to expound. In the exposition there are watermarks of personal idiosyncrasies (see on xi. 17), and the letter is not his last word on certain aspects of the faith. Nevertheless words on a local issue rise repeatedly into a lasting counsel. Thus we have in this one letter no fewer than four supreme passages: the tense, terse statement of what the story of the cross or of the divine wisdom means (i. 18–ii. 12), the narrative of the Lord's supper (xi. 23 f.), the rhapsody on love (xiii.), which classical scholars hail as a new departure in Greek literature, and the majestic description of the End (xv. 42–58). These are sustained pieces of more or less rhythmical prose, written in the great style which comes naturally now and then to one of the great minds in the history of religion, as he is endeavouring to transmit what is to him not one of the interests of a varied life, but the supreme vision of reality, which alone illuminates and inspires the soul of man. Besides such passages there are shorter words. Even when he is speaking closely to the point, his mind is so saturated with the subject that frequently he pours out some incisive, simple saying that carries far beyond the immediate issue. Such as, for instance: 'He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit'; 'Let every man abide in the calling wherein he was called'; 'Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall'; 'The fashion of this world passeth away'; 'Knowledge puffeth up, charity edifieth'; 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able'; 'God is not the author of confusion but of peace'; and, 'We have received, not the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' Of the half-dozen kingdom sayings dropped by the apostle, three lie in this letter: 'The kingdom of God is not in word but in power'; 'Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God'; and, 'The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.' Sometimes a sentence prods with the sharpness of a paradox: 'Lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect'; or, 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.' Others are thrown into the form of a query: 'What hast thou that thou didst not receive?' 'Despise ye the Church of God?' 'If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?' Or they are personal, even autobiographical, words like: 'All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any'; 'Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel'; 'I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some'; 'Be ye followers of me, even as I am also of Christ'; 'I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.' Such aphorisms do not lose their force even as they pass from Greek into other languages. They illustrate Aristotle's dictum that 'the perfection of style is to be clear without being mean.' Even when they happen to be asides, they are too tense to be irrelevant; it is, indeed, in their original context that they witness most impressively to what Paul held as the Centre of that full, free religious faith which he wrote, as he lived, to set before the minds of those for whom he counted himself responsible to God.

COMMENTARY

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THE PROLOGUE

(i. 1–9)

The Prologue of the letter opens with an address as usual (1–3).

i.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, 1
with brother Sosthenes, to the church of God at Corinth, to 2
those who are consecrated in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who, wherever they may be, invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord no less than ours: grace 3
and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is to be a pastoral with authority ; the apostle has been 1 asked to decide some disputed points (vii. 1 f.), and he is also aware that his apostolic position has been criticized in some circles of the local church (e.g. iv. 3 f., vii. 40, ix. 1 f., xiv. 37, xv. 10, etc.). For the first time in his extant correspondence, he describes himself in the address as **called** or selected for the mission of a delegate or representative **of Jesus Christ**, and, further, as commissioned **by the will of God.** Hitherto he has not spoken of God's will in relation to the apostolic ministry. But he does so in the only other allusion to the Will in this letter (xvi. 12) ; here it is to stress the divine authority behind him as he interprets and enforces the gospel of **Jesus** the living, risen Lord or **Christ. An apostle** (xv. 2) means more than one who brings good news, and **called** implies that the summons to this high calling has not merely come from God, but been accepted. Paul has not taken it upon himself to engage in the vocation, nor is it simply one of giving advice ; it is a responsible position in which he is bound to give instructions on the full truth of the gospel (xv. 3 f.) with authority—

an authority involving duties which he exercises seriously and heartily (iv. 1, 14 f., ix. 17 f., xv. 30 f.), as one who is ultimately answerable to God alone. He courteously associates with himself a fellow Christian, **Sosthenes.** When the proconsul Gallio had ruled out of court the Jews and their charges brought against Paul, the pagan mob amused itself by thrashing the spokesman of this unpopular sect, while the Roman lictors took no notice. His name was Sosthenes. As the name is not very common, this may well be the same man, possibly converted later by Apollos. He was evidently familiar to the local church, and had joined Paul at Ephesus. Otherwise nothing is known of him. It is mere guess-work that he acted as the apostle's amanuensis or that he was one of those **brothers** who conveyed the letter to Corinth (xvi. 12).

2 God's **church,** as it was **at Corinth,** or anywhere else, this religious community which is non-political and independent of racial ties, is composed of those who have been set apart or **consecrated** at baptism (vi. 11), which is the same thing as being **called to be saints,** i.e. graciously summoned to membership in the sacred fellowship (see p. xxviii.). Not all are called to be apostles, but to be a Christian, to belong **to the church of God,** means in the last resort that God has chosen and **called** the ordinary individual no less than in the case of a specific vocation like the apostolate. This one, clear call of God, which echoes through the Christian life from first to last, is not an invitation, but a summons; it is the other side of election. The truth of it is more present to Paul's mind in the prologue than the English reader understands, for the Greek term rendered by **church** originally denoted citizens 'called' from their households to a public gathering, and the word for 'blameless' (**vindicated,** verse 8) literally means 'not called to account,' or 'not called up for censure.' The second note of the Church, as those who **invoke** or call upon **Jesus Christ,** is in harmony with the same idea. The primitive Church saw in its new, thrilling experience a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy about an outpouring of the Spirit in the latter days, immediately before the great Day of the Lord; **and everyone who invokes the name of the Lord shall be saved** (Acts ii. 17 f.).

Though Paul is not quoting from this here, as he does in Rom. x. 13, he has the prediction in mind when writing of the Corinthians **waiting till . . . the day of our Lord Jesus Christ** (verses 7, 8), and particularly in describing Christians as those **who invoke the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,** calling on him as their Lord in worship (xvi. 22). **Name** is person ; the phrase, never elsewhere employed by Paul in his letters, suggests that the **called** manifest their devotion and loyalty by owning him, and none else, as **Lord** in prayer, former Jews particularly by giving him the divine title of **Christ** and former pagans by hailing him as **Lord.** The Corinthians are deliberately associated with all such loyalists, **wherever they may be.** Theirs is ' a call from God in which all share ' (Dr. Gunion Rutherford). A general statement ; but the point of the reminder comes out sharply as the letter goes on (vii. 17, xi. 16, xiv. 33, 36, xvi. 1, 19). The wording is wider than in 2 Cor. i. 1, covering other Christians overseas as well as in Greece.

The customary blessing, an original creation of Paul (see on 3
xvi. 23 and xiv. 33), implies that the **peace** or well-being, the quiet, glad assurance in which Christians stand towards their God, is the outcome of his free favour (verse 4), shown in the call to belong to his Church. The terms **church** and **saints,** taken over from the Greek Bible, breathe the tacit conviction that it is Christians who are the true People of God (see x. 1 f.), as they are invoking the Lord Jesus in their worship of God. The latter conjunction runs right through the epistle (see the notes on viii. 6 and on xv. 28). Though Paul does not discuss directly in this letter how faith in God is related to an invocation of Jesus Christ as divine, he realizes that the difficulties and dangers of the local church went back to an inadequate conception of this. The Corinthians had no trouble at present from the State, not even from any enforcement of the imperial worship (see above, p. xix.) which technically claimed ' Lord ' for the emperor. Their main failures in worship, creed and behaviour lay in an insufficient sense of what the divine call meant, and this was bound up with defective ideas about the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence their failure to draw the line as they should have done between the Church and the world. They

had been, indeed, drawing the line often uncharitably between themselves and others in the fellowship. But in both cases the cardinal flaw was that they had been losing sight of what the Lord Jesus meant to those **called** into God's Church.

Before entering upon this theme, however, Paul as usual does generous justice to their good qualities (4–9). It is important to realize that this estimate of the local church was no conventional praise ; it represents his **pride** (xv. 31) and deep affection (iv. 14 f.) for them. The fact that his opening counsels—from i. 10 to the end of the eleventh chapter—deal with unsatisfactory and even ominous features of their Church-life, must not blind us to his steady belief in their sound, solid core of faith (see below, pp. 176, 270), a belief which proved to be well founded (see above, p. xxx.).

4 **I always thank my God for the grace of God that has been**
5 **bestowed on you in Christ Jesus ; in him you have received**
a wealth of all blessing, full power to speak of your faith and
6 **full insight into its meaning, all of which verifies the testi-**
7 **mony we bore to Christ when we were with you. Thus you**
lack no spiritual endowment during these days of waiting
8 **till our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed ; and to the very end**
he will guarantee that you are vindicated on the day of our
9 **Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is the God who called you to**
participate in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

4 The next five verses (4–8) are one long sentence. ' Nothing is so dear to God,' Chrysostom observes, ' as thankfulness on account of oneself and of others.' Paul generally starts a letter by gratefully recognizing the sterling qualities in his correspondents. At Corinth the call and consecration of the local Christians had taken the form of a rich endowment of God's
5 **grace**, shown in ability to discuss the **faith** and in knowledge of its deeper **meaning**. It is the first time that this term ' knowledge ' (ii. 12) or **insight** (gnosis) occurs in the New Testament, a term which had special as well as popular connotations (see on ii. 12, viii. 1, xii. 8, xv. 34). Strong points in character are usually the points at which temptations are most likely to assail life, in individuals or in communities, and the apostle

will have much to say about the risks of talk and speculation. But blame comes best on the back of praise. Paul, with a tactfulness which is more than diplomatic, warmly recognizes the **wealth of all blessing** from God which had been evident during the past four years. It was a highly gifted church. There is nothing ironical in his allusion to ' utterance and knowledge.' As at Thessalonica (1 Thess. i. 4 f., 2 Thess. i. 10), so at Corinth, he has ample reason to thank God for a Christian record which attested his own original preaching ; such fruit means a good 6 root, well planted and watered, or, in his own semi-legal metaphor, **all** this **verifies the testimony we bore to Christ** four years ago **when we were with you.** 'Thank God, it is proved to have been vital and valid.' This, however, by the way. His main 7 theme is that such divine endowments will not only be needed but forthcoming during the brief, trying interval (vii. 26) before the day of judgement at the climax of God's purpose for the world. Christians are not **called to be saints** and then left to their own resources during the days of waiting. They never 8 **lack** any **spiritual endowment** or ' grace-gift ' to fit them for their course. Christ himself is not a mere object of hope ; as they have received effectively their present standing in him, he in turn will see to it that loyal experience never collapses. **He will guarantee** echoes the same Greek verb as **verifies,** and the thought of Christians being finally vindicated or acquitted is repeated in passages like Rom. viii. 31 f., Col. i. 22, Phil. i. 6, 10. But as this saving hope is the outcome of being definitely **in Christ Jesus** (4), which is due to **the grace of God,** Paul ends his 9 paragraph as he began it by recalling the Corinthians to the thought of God's grace or call. **Faithful is the God who called you** to this assured relationship with **his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.** Of God's fidelity in this connexion (x. 13) he has already spoken (in 1 Thess. v. 24, 2 Thess. iii. 3), but this is the first time he mentions participation in its pregnant sense of fellowship (see on x. 16 f.). The primary sense of ' having a share in ' carried the further sense of a common share ; one participates in what is a common benefit.

It is this truth which sets Paul off at once, in the opening passage of

THE CHURCH, THE GOSPEL, AND THE APOSTLES
(i. 10–iv. 21)

To think of this common participation or fellowship with Christ and with one another being endangered by party-spirit (i. 10–17)! So Paul had heard from some agents of **Chloe,** a local business woman, who were travelling for the firm between Corinth and Ephesus. She is the first woman mentioned by the apostle in his letters. Instead of discussing the respective claims of the cliques, he penetrates to their common error. Such differences of opinion and taste, treating apostles and teachers as though they were rival lecturers on moral philosophy or even popular actors on the stage, took men's attention off the common Lord, roused undue pride in human leaders and preachers, set Christians at loggerheads, and ignored the fact that all the different capacities of prominent men were so many varieties and organs of the one life which God himself provided for his Church in Jesus Christ. Eight times over, in this opening passage, he has echoed the name of Jesus Christ as the Lord whom God has made all for everyone in the fellowship. What right has any clique or party-leader to set up a special claim to him, or to come between him and his?

10 Brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ I beg of you all to
drop these party-cries. There must be no cliques among
you ; you must regain your common temper and attitude.
11 For Chloe's people inform me, my brothers, that you are
12 quarrelling. By 'quarrelling' I mean that each of you
has his party-cry, 'I belong to Paul,' 'And I to Apollos,'
13 'And I to Cephas,' 'And I to Christ.' Has Christ been
parcelled out? Was it Paul who was crucified for you?
14 Was it in Paul's name that you were baptized? I am
thankful now that I baptized none of you, except Crispus
and Gaius, so that no one can say you were baptized in my
15–16 name. (Well, I did baptize the household of Stephanas, but
17 no one else, as far as I remember.) Christ did not send me
to baptize but to preach the gospel.

Even across the Ægean Paul seemed to hear shrill cries of 10 party-spirit at Corinth. The factiousness which had been the curse of Greek democracy had made its way into the local church; indeed he employs two phrases current in Greek political and social thought, as he appeals for harmony. **To drop these party-cries** (literally, 'to speak the same thing') and to **regain unity** had been used by Aristotle, Herodotus, and Thucydides long ago in demanding agreement and the settling of differences between disjointed partisans in public life; the latter term reappears in 2 Cor. xiii. 9, 11. Paul views this ugly outburst very gravely. '**For the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ** (literally, 'by the name of,' i.e. by all that he is and is to you), I implore you to compose your quarrels. **There must** not be (as alas there are) any **cliques** or divisions among you.' It is only in this letter that he speaks of **cliques** (xi. 18, xii. 25 **disunion**). Cliques among **brothers**! Cliques among Christians! In a final article on the Oxford Movement, written in 1839, just before he went over to the Roman Church, Newman remarked that in any such movement 'there will ever be a number of persons professing the opinions of the party . . . too young to be wise, too generous to be cautious, too warm to be sober, or too intellectual to be humble. Such persons will be very apt to attach themselves to particular persons, to use particular names, to say things merely because others do, and to act in a party-spirited way.' What Newman detected in some of his own supporters, the temper of uppishness and extreme partisanship, was moving at Corinth. Paul does not analyse the opinions of the various parties. He was concerned 11 not so much with them in whole or part as with the quarrelsome spirit which they bred. There is no indication that Peter, much less Apollos, had any sympathy with the rivalries of those who took their names in vain. Neither is the party-spirit purely doctrinal. It arose out of the one-sided zeal of certain individuals who failed to realize what fellowship with the Lord and with one another implied. In Church life, as in political life, differences of opinion and taste become embittered by personal preferences, especially when, as at Corinth, there is a variety of choice between leading men who may have far more in common than their eager adherents realize. Now and then in this epistle we may feel that Paul connects one party or another with what he considered to be an attack on himself or on the Christian gospel for which he stood. But it is 12 seldom possible to be sure of this. Those who cried **I belong to Paul,** 'I am Paul's man,' would be original converts of his, who declined to hear of anyone except their cherished apostle. Others swore by **Apollos** (a shortened form of Apollonius), whose fine preaching about Christian wisdom in the Alexandrian style had suited them better. Others again held by Peter or **Cephas.** While there is no evidence that Peter ever founded any church, as the senior member of the twelve he visited churches like those of Antioch, Rome, and probably Corinth on his way to Rome, churches which had come into being before he ceased to confine his energies to supervising Jewish Christian communities in Palestine. Probably some of his adherents at Corinth belonged to the group which doubted the apostolic credentials of Paul, if they did not belong to the Palestinian Christians by whom Peter's authority was viewed as supreme. It is more difficult to make out those whose watchword was **I belong to Christ.** The cry might be taken by itself, indeed, as an ejaculation of Paul. It is so in 2 Cor. x. 7. On the other hand some individual leader is also indicated there, who had made this claim. The cry, therefore, seems to voice a party which may be identified, not with the Peter-group (for their ascetic views ran counter to Peter's practice, as we see in ix. 5), but with some ultra-spiritual devotees or high-flying gnostics who made a mystical Christ, no human leader, the centre of religion. Or they may have proudly repudiated all the others as sectarian, crying, 'A plague on your parties! **Christ** is enough for us!' In the latter case, Paul's retort comes not only in iii. 21 f., but immediately, in 13 the indignant question, **Has Christ been parcelled out?** Though this protest covers all the groups, it starts from the sectional claim of the last-named clique. 'The idea of Christ being monopolized by any one party, even by those who ostentatiously lay claim to his name! That means, he has been broken up, the Christ who is one, the Christ in whom we all participate!' The sense would not be altered even if the words were taken as a mournful statement, instead of as a query: 'So Christ has been divided up by your dissensions!'

Tactfully he chooses his own party or clique to illustrate a 14 further error of the partisan devotion which relegated Christ to some secondary position. As usual he sees something providential in what had happened. He is glad to think that he did not make a practice of baptizing his converts at Corinth. Otherwise they might have thought themselves baptized in his **name**, i.e. as belonging to him instead of to Christ. But he had not spent his time at Corinth in manufacturing Paulinists. In some mystery cults of the day, the initiated person honoured the priest or mystagogue who introduced him into the mysteries, as his 'father'; while the initiated were brethren, each viewed himself as the son of his particular director (see on iv. 1), although no one was initiated into 'the name' of any cult-deity. Similarly, in the Jewish baptism of proselytes, the teacher accompanied his catechumen into the water, to recite over him the requisite commands and duties of the new faith. Paul was indeed the **father** of his Corinthian church (iv. 15), though not in the sense that he had made himself the father confessor of every individual convert at the rite of baptism, as 15 though each initiate occupied a special relationship to him. Yet the Corinthians were in danger of regarding Christianity as a synagogal or Hellenistic cult, where this vogue prevailed. **How thankful I am now that I baptized** only two of you. No clique can make it their cry, 'I was dipped by Paul.' Then, suddenly reminded that he had baptized **the household of** 16 **Stephanas** (who was beside him at the moment that he dictated this sentence), he corrects himself, adding that his main business was **to preach the gospel.** Except for Rom. x. 15 17 **(how can men preach unless they are sent ?)**, this is the only place where the apostle describes himself as sent (*apostellein*) by Christ. He is far from depreciating baptism, which was the sacrament of incorporation into Christ or the Church (vi. 11, xii. 13). But, in point of fact, most Christians seem to have baptized themselves (vi. 11), as Paul himself had done. It was only in an exceptional case that a convert would insist on being baptized by some apostle to whom he owed a deep personal debt. Besides, there were a number of pagan hearers who required catechizing and training before they could safely be admitted to full membership. As we know (xv. 29), some converted Corinthians had actually died before they could be baptized. Paul may not have had time to spare for this task, which others could discharge. Vital as baptism was, it was not so essential a part of his vocation as proclaiming the gospel and winning over souls, who were then supervised by his colleagues. An example of the preliminary training required is furnished by a second-century manual called the Didache. The absorbing duty of the apostle was to sow the seed, which others in the mission—men like Silas, Timotheus, or Apollos perhaps—looked after. If baptism needed apostolic hands, Paul felt he might devolve it on these men, while he ministered the audible sacrament of the Word. Luke's description of him at Corinth as **engrossed in preaching** points to an unusual concentration upon this function in the mission. The proclamation of the gospel, as he spoke in the Spirit, brought receptive hearers into touch with the living God ; faith came by hearing this message of, and from, the Lord, and thereby some were put in contact with the presence and power of the real God (2 Cor. ii. 14 f., Rom. i. 16 f.). There must have been special circumstances at Corinth which made him drop everything in favour of this duty.

For, if Paul did not come to Corinth as the mystagogue of a cult, with secret rites, he was not a lecturer on the philosophy of religion nor a peripatetic counsellor on practical ethics. He bore a revelation and a testimony from God, which prevailed in power over the heart and conscience of his hearers. Like Peter (Acts x. 48), he might often be content to waken the soul to God, leaving others to administer, if need be, the baptismal rite either at once or subsequently. But in preaching the gospel he was doing more than talking about God. This is the theme of the following passage (i. 17–ii. 5), where the movement of thought (running on to iv. 6) is started by critics of his own preaching, who thought and said that his gospel was not sufficiently advanced ; it lacked ' wisdom ' in the sense of a speculative, philosophical exposition of the faith. His teaching

[illegible] criticises it; but [illegible]
makes himself a part of the age by [illegible]

was even compared, to its disadvantage, with that of his colleague Apollos. Paul's method is, in the first instance, to reaffirm the gospel he had preached as the one wisdom of God. With a daring, effective use of paradox and antithesis, he glories in it as apparent 'folly,' judged by Greeks and Jews alike, though he is more concerned with Greeks than with Jews. He contrasts the gospel of a crucified and risen Christ with the 'wisdom' or philosophy of the contemporary religious world which sneered at any such revelation of the divine mind for men. At the same time, he repudiates any difference between himself and Apollos. Furthermore, still playing on the theme of 'wisdom,' he proceeds to the paradox that the gospel he had preached possesses a 'wisdom' of its own, an inherent range of deeper truth. Only, it is the very temper of partisanship which prevents the Corinthians from understanding it; their party-spirit, as well as the tendency of some teachers to undervalue the Cross, must stand in the way of insight into the real 'wisdom' of the apostolic witness to the Lord.

And to preach it with no fine rhetoric, lest the cross of Christ 17
should lose its power! Those who are doomed to perish 18
find the story of the cross 'sheer folly,' but it means the
power of God for those whom he saves. It is written, 19
I will destroy the wisdom of the sages,
I will confound the insight of the wise.
***Sage, scribe,* critic of this world, *where are they all?* Has 20**
not God stultified the wisdom of the world? For when the 21
world with all its wisdom failed to know God in his wisdom,
God resolved to save believers by the 'sheer folly' of the
Christian message. Jews demand miracles and Greeks want 22
wisdom, but our message is Christ the crucified—a stum- 23
bling-block to Jews, 'sheer folly' to Gentiles, but for those 24
who are called, whether Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the
power of God and the wisdom of God.
For the 'foolishness' of God is wiser than men, 25
and the 'weakness' of God is stronger than men.

No fine rhetoric is literally 'no wisdom of words or of 17 speech.' It is the first time that 'wisdom' occurs in the

writings of Paul, and the reference is to Greek sophistry and eloquence, which, if it was not flowery, was already felt by many serious Greeks themselves not to be fruitful. He returns to this point later (ii. 1 f.). Meantime it is the content rather than the form of utterance that engages his attention. Studied rhetoric would have emptied the Christian gospel of its meaning and force; any such self-display or catering to a taste for eloquence or speculation would not have been the
18 speech or words of **wisdom** (xii. 8) by which Christian prophets set forth **the** gospel or **story of the cross,** which is God's **power.** 'Call that "**sheer folly,**" if you like; some call us **fools** (iv. 10) to proclaim it; you see no rationale in it, you with your self-styled "wisdom" and withering scorn for a gospel that dares to open the things of God to the uneducated. It is "**sheer folly,**" but it proves stronger than any "wisdom" of the world. We Christians need no such "wisdom," and yet we have a Wisdom of our own which is the real, saving power.' Such is the thought of what follows (18–31). To be saved was strictly an eschatological hope, the climax of God's dealing with men (Rom. xiii. 11, etc.), but Paul could speak of Christians as **those whom he saves** (verse 21, ix. 22), and the phrase here is charged with this belief. Though we might expect **wisdom** to be used at this point, he hurries on (as in Rom. i. 16) to the effectiveness of revelation in the sphere of human
19 faith. **Power** and **wisdom** were terms of current theosophy, almost semi-technical words (see Acts viii. 10, Luke xi. 49). So far as Paul adopts them (see on x. 4 and 10, ii. 5 and xv. 25), it is in the light of the divine character of love, through which alone they are to be understood (see on viii. 3).

20 To include Greek sophists as well as Jewish scribes, he inserts **critic of this world** (the man who loves religious discussion of man's life in time, or delights in problems of the day) in a free citation from his favourite book of Isaiah (xxix. 14), making it a triumphant outburst over the failure of both Greek and Jew to reach the true wisdom or revelation of God. There is a self-conscious subtlety and a reliance upon acute mental calculation which may actually come between the human soul and any real knowledge of God, it is implied. The Cross is

enough to stamp this wisdom-quest of both parties as **futile** (Rom. i. 22 f.). **God took action**; he **resolved**, Paul writes, with 21 daring force, to let these men of the religious world, these professional experts in things divine, see what true religion is. Both Jews and non-Jews (for **Greeks**, here as elsewhere, denotes 22 the world of humanity outside Judaism) in different ways had been in search of God. Paul is not contrasting the supernatural tendency of Jews with any purely philosophical interest, as though the **demand** for **miracles** or signs (attesting anyone who appeared as a prophet or as messiah) showed a sense of the supernatural which was not shared by other nations. The **wisdom** desired by Greeks was not merely intellectual. Even during **the ages of ignorance**, as he had called them at Athens, Greeks had been groping after God in their own way. Still there was enough to justify the broad distinction. Jews did believe in historic revelation as Greeks could not be said to do, with their characteristic demand that any religion should be primarily judged by its ability to give some philosophical account of the relations between God and man. Paul confronts both religious tendencies with the high statement that these approaches to the truth are shown to be absurd by the very revelation which they agreed in thinking absurd. Christianity no more than another eccentric Oriental novelty, an upstart superstition, a petty, provincial rival of Judaism and of pagan religion? On the contrary, Paul maintains with amazing breadth of view and depth of conviction, challenging all scornful critics of the gospel, it alone possesses the clue to the meaning of the quests and questions of the whole world's religious history. This clue to God's plan and purpose for the universe is to be found in **the story of the cross**, and nowhere else. The spirit of Paul's claim is very much that of Milton's line:

> Down, reason, then; at least, vain reasonings down.

The **sheer folly** of the Christian preaching is the apparent fact 23 that it is not by reasoning that God's deep wisdom is attained; men have but to listen to the proclamation of the Cross, and have faith, in order to be saved. Only it is the content, rather than the method, of the message on which he lays stress here. The word for **message** or preaching (*kerugma*) is not used in the mystery cults. Paul employs it for the first time (ii. 4, xv. 14), and in the sense of proclamation, the proclamation of a divine, royal revelation, which is **Christ the crucified.** To **Jews** this was offensive. How well he himself knew it! A **crucified** messiah the source of life divine (Gal. iii. 12 f.)! Pagans or gentiles shrugged their shoulders at it as utter absurdity, Paul adds, having in mind the Greek scorn for faith in contrast to speculation or reasoning as the avenue to a true knowledge of God, such as he had recently encountered at Athens.

This section of the epistle was much used by Origen at Alexandria. When Celsus the Roman critic sneered at Christians for putting a premium on folly instead of appreciating intelligence, Origen (*Philocalia*, xviii.) replied by citing this very passage. As he explained, the Christian is a fool to outsiders exactly as a Platonist seemed a fool to Stoics and Epicureans who derided immortality; **folly** is a relative term, a judgement of supposed value, not an absolute term. In First Corinthians Paul himself takes occasion before long to show that his gospel is no silly, narrow superstition; but at this point he confines himself to the glorious paradox of its centre in **the story of the cross,** which is no graphic or sentimental recital of what had actually happened at the crucifixion, but God's 'word' or revelation (xiv. 36) which came into power through the cross and its preaching. It was **the story** of how the Lord came from heaven to earth (ii. 6 f.), of the life that led to his death (xi. 23 f.), of the resurrection that followed (xv. 3 f.),
21 and of the final End when he returned. **The world** of Greece and Rome, for **all its wisdom** and its genuine love for wisdom, could not conceive that such a self-sacrifice was possible for any deity; they derided it as absurd and irrelevant, preferring to go to God on their own path, Paul remarks. He never deigns to recognize any equivalent for such real historical self-sacrifice in the rites of any cult. He would probably have dismissed them all as blind dreams.

Man walks in a vain show;
They know, yet will not know—

the true knowledge of God. Greeks had no interest in any messiah, crucified or not. Judaism had also decided that self-sacrifice, such as the gospel preached, could have no place in their idea of God; they refused to see that the one heavenly proof of messianic authority and of the messianic age was **the cross** itself, with all that it meant. It is significant that Paul 23
repeats (Gal. v. 11) a term of his mission-preaching, **the stumbling-block** that **the cross** was to Jews, an utterly repellent conception (xii. 3), which undermined the Torah and substituted faith for obedience to God's Law, beside throwing fellowship with the one and only God open to pagans indiscriminately. Inside the Church, as Paul afterwards recognizes (viii. 9), there were stumbling-blocks which ought to be avoided. But he would not hear of this, the central **stumbling-block,** being ignored or smoothed away in order to attract Jews to the faith, any more than he would recast the wisdom of the Cross to suit the prejudices of Greeks. It was only a **stumbling-block** for those who refused to see that in the history of Jesus the final and saving revelation of God was enshrined, as well as already predicted in the sacred Book and realized through the working of the divine Spirit on earth. The **story of the cross** was the word of God inspiring the apostles to speak of him and for him in this decisive revelation. Staggering as it might be, **the story of the cross** had to be proclaimed to all and sundry, if the power of God was to come effectively into play. Outwardly the crucifixion might seem an exhibition of **weak-** 25
ness, as Jesus allowed himself to be crushed by the strong hand of the authorities, like many another leader of messianic revolt, before he could do damage to the nation. With superb daring, Paul calls this a divine **weakness,** as he does later in 2 Cor. xiii. 4. Only so could the divine power really show itself, as it has (ii. 8 f., xv. 20 f.). The **story of the cross** is making, and will make, history, under God.

In i. 18 f., indeed, down to iii. 20, Paul is using reminiscences of scripture in order to clinch his argument against the inadequacy of 'humanist' wisdom. God's Word says so. He recalls phrases both from the Law and the hagiographa. Elsewhere, also, in his letters—in fact throughout the New Testament generally—such composite citations suggest that they were drawn from a catena or source-book, compiled in order to meet the needs of controversy. The Old Testament was a bulky book. It would be convenient to possess a collection of relevant citations for the purpose of propaganda as well as of teaching. There is some reason to believe that such florilegia, as they are called, were in existence before the rise of Christianity; probably in the first instance they were drawn up during the controversy between Judaism and Hellenism. They were not invariably taken from our canonical text of the Septuagint (p. 224), and extracts would be grouped together often on verbal lines, without reference to their original context. Christians composed such a vade-mecum for messianic purposes (xv. 3 f.). But in the present section the apostle may well be employing some handbook known to him in his rabbinic days for use against Hellenistic propaganda, such as the Nazarene faith first seemed to him. This would account for the combination of the texts and for their occasional divergence from the Septuagint, if the latter feature is not explained by a lapse of memory. Obviously this would prevent one from speaking, without due qualification, of the apostle's favourite books; to judge from the number of citations, these are Isaiah, the Psalms, Genesis, and Deuteronomy. But then much depends on the extent to which such citations already lay in the florilegia before him.

24 There is scripture for what we apostles (2 Cor. i. 19) preach to **those who are called** (this being the basis of life for **believers,** verse 21). Is it not verified among yourselves at Corinth
25 (26–31), this marvellous message of, and from, a Christ who embodies the divine **power** and **wisdom**? How else can your existence be accounted for? **Power** answers to **miracles,** which as 'signs' meant the manifestation of divine authority on earth. The apostle may be recalling a phrase from one of his Wisdom books, 'wisdom and power belong to God' (Job. xii. 13), or from a version of Dan. i. 20 (preserved in Theodotion's text), where human sagacity and ability are disclaimed in the sphere of things divine; but more probably he is citing from his textbook the gist of a great passage in

[illegible] righteousness [illegible] pp. 51-52-5
tice, insti [illegible]

Jeremiah (ix. 23 f.), an echo of which occurs at the close of the next paragraph (26–31)—

[illegible] right [illegible]

> ‘ Let not the wise boast of his wisdom,
> neither let the strong boast of his strength,
> neither let the rich boast of his riches ;
> but let him who boasts boast of this,
> that he knows me to be the Lord,
> who exercises lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness on earth.’

Why, look at your own ranks, my brothers ; not many wise 26
men (that is, judged by human standards), not many
leading men, not many of good birth, have been called ! No, 27
God has chosen what is foolish in the world
to shame the wise ;
God has chosen what is weak in the world
to shame what is strong ;
God has chosen what is mean and despised in the world— 28
things which are not, to put down things that are ;
that no person may boast in the sight of God. This is the 29–30
God to whom you owe your being in Christ Jesus, whom
God has made our ‘ Wisdom,’ that is, our righteousness
and consecration and redemption ; so that, as it is written, 31
let him who boasts boast of the Lord.

The dominant note of 26–29, which is one long sentence, is 26 still God’s choice or call. The **called** have their position towards God, for **ranks** or ‘ calling ’ does not refer to social position or occupation in the world, except in the sense that God’s choice of Christians proves how little he thinks of mere cleverness or civic standing. The rhythm of the passage sweeps three special 27 classes together, as the prophet had done, though Paul singles out the intellectuals, men of influence and power, and men of good birth and social position, adding a philosophical term for 28 nonentities (non-entities), **things which are not,** to complete the description of the Church as it appears to the judgement of the outside world. There is a divine reason for the fact that so few 29

justification by faith.

distinguished persons are in the ranks of the called; it is to
show how God means to discredit or set down human pride.
So far from being ashamed of the majority being mean, poor
creatures, uncultured and insignificant, **judged by human
standards**, let the Corinthian Church-folk recognize in this a
deep significance. He has already hinted that the local church
has many a ‘ wise ’ heart as well as a strong soul in its membership,
30 and now he catches up this consoling truth by describing
Christ as the real **Wisdom**. ‘ The world may think you nonentities,
but you have a real **being** and strength of your own,
which **you owe to this God** whose ways run counter to **human
standards** and are so upsetting.’ Paul's favourite stress upon
humility (iii. 21, iv. 7) in opposition to boasting is not specifically
intended for Christians here, though he generally took
pains to bring out what a humbling thing it is to be **chosen** by
God; if there is to be any glorying or boasting, let it be in the
amazing, undeserved honour of being **called** by God. The
range and direction of this argument, however, include any
Greeks or Jews who look down from a fancied superiority of
culture or tradition upon this poor, upstart minority of simple-minded
Christians. Later in the first century a Jewish prophet
foretold that

> ‘ the mean shall rule over those of good birth,
> those of low degree shall be extolled over the famous,
> those who were nothing shall have sway over the strong,
> the poor shall have abundance beyond the rich,
> the wise shall be silent and the foolish speak.’

So (in the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch lxx.) it is predicted that the advent of the End will be marked by social upheaval and the reversal of class-distinctions. What this prophet stamps as a terrible sign of the End is hailed by Paul as a signal proof of God's saving providence. Human pride, which naturally boasts of its privileges, is already ruled out by the divine procedure in choosing members for the Church during the period before the End which has been inaugurated by the resurrection of Jesus and the preaching of the gospel. Paul's deep consciousness of God's method in this echoes the thought of Jesus

(Matt. xi. 25 f., Luke x. 21 f.). But, while one evangelist recalled the O.T. song of Hannah (Luke i. 46 f.), as the apostle thinks of this spiritual revolution he sees in it the divine purpose of crushing human pride (29 f.) and finds (here as in 2 Cor. x. 17) its object prefigured in the saying of the prophet Jeremiah—though, it must be remembered, Paul's Greek Bible had Jer. ix. 22 f. added to the song of Hannah.

The highest wisdom for man is not intellectual knowledge, but real life, which is only to be experienced in personal fellowship with Christ Jesus. Paul loves to make his very phrases personal when he refers to this (see on viii. 6 and Col. iii. 1–2). As Christian wisdom is not information about the Lord, but living in him, **Wisdom** is defined in terms of the religious experience; through Christ, dying and risen, you are put right with God, **consecrated** (i. 2) to him as his own, and redeemed or freed from slavery to sin. Corinthians who had washed themselves at baptism did not require any explanation of terms which were familiar descriptions of the Christian position (e.g. vi. 11), so many aspects of the same experience (i. 1–9). There is no need to suppose that **redemption** is placed last, with any eschatological significance (as in Rom. viii. 23). What concerns Paul is to bring out the absolute indebtedness of Christians to God's sovereign and gracious will which plans and realizes their life. Let men glory in this, he protests, not in 31 any knowledge or attainments of their own, but, as the prophet said long ago, in recognizing how **the Lord** is revealed thus to humble faith, amid the very slums and scum of a place like Corinth, putting new meaning and hope into human existence.

After this general word on **the story of the cross** (18–31), to which the Corinthian church owed its existence (17), Paul recalls negatively (ii. 1–3) and positively (4, 5) how it had been brought to Corinth. 'Why, remember the start of the mission among yourselves and how God used my unaffected, absorbing message about **Jesus the Christ** who had been **crucified, in order** to bring you into being.'

ii.

Thus when I came to you, my brothers, I did not come to 1
proclaim to you God's secret purpose with any elaborate

2 **words or wisdom ; I determined among you to be ignorant of everything except Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ the**
3 **crucified. It was in weakness and fear and with great**
4 **trembling that I visited you ; what I said, what I preached, did not rest on any plausible arguments of 'wisdom' but**
5 **on the proof supplied by the Spirit and its power, so that your faith might not rest on any human 'wisdom' but on the power of God.**

1 Whatever later teachers had done, Paul had been simple and direct in preaching the gospel at Corinth. The repeated **I** is as emphatic as **not with any elaborate words or wisdom ;** it contrasts his message and method with some who had brought a more speculative version of the faith. He is not suggesting that he had abandoned an appeal to natural religion for a more evangelical style of preaching, which diplomatically he withheld from the cultured audience on the Areopagus. At Athens he had not been able to start from any belief in resurrection, as he could in a synagogue. Following his own principle of being all things to all men, he had been leading up to this core of his gospel just when he was interrupted. The curve of his address was obviously a broad-minded prelude to the very truth of Jesus and the resurrection which inspired his teaching at Corinth, as it inspires this letter. There is no hint that he had felt disillusioned by the Athenian experience. It is not of any such contrast between one method of his own and another that he thinks in the present passage, but of the difference between himself and other evangelists who had tried to be more ambitious and philosophic in the mission (iii. 10) since he left. When he reached Corinth, he again adapted himself to his audience, and spoke as the local citizens needed to be spoken to, but the theme was the same. Even at Athens there had been no **elaborate words or wisdom.** He had made no display of the **rhetoric** (i. 17) to which Greeks were accustomed from so many itinerant sophists. By this time rhetoric had fallen sadly from its rank in the higher education of the Greeks. Instead of being the art of thoughtful persuasion, which depended largely on a cultured skill in words of conviction, it was

now meretricious ; to all intents and purposes it had become an empiric method of amusing audiences with sonorous or flippant discussions on art, morals, or literature, which had little or no grasp of reality. The new Cynics and the more serious Stoics derided it, as they derided the sophists or so-called 'wise men' who decked out a lecture on 'What is proof?'; 'Is it permissible to marry?'; 'Is it permissible to commit suicide?' and so forth, with catchy phrases and sounding sentences. Corinthians knew this type of strolling sophist well. 'Not so did I,' Paul reminds them, with a side-stroke at Christian teachers who, in his judgement, were doing pretty much what pagan sophists were prone to practise, in fact making a flowery, sublimated philosophy of religion out of **God's secret purpose.** 'The natural man loveth eloquence,' John Woolman observes in his Journal ; 'I was preserved in the ministry to keep low with the truth.'

This is really the first time that Paul, speaking to some familiar with 'mysteries' and divine 'knowledge' in Hellenistic mysticism, describes the Christian revelation as **God's secret purpose** (*musterion*). The word was soon changed into 'the testimony' (*marturion*) of God by someone who recollected i. 6. It is another term for the gospel as God's saving purpose, and is never employed by Paul except as something to be authoritatively proclaimed or made known. Presently he goes on to describe it as an open secret revealed through the Spirit (verses 6 f.), but here it is depicted on the negative side of its presentation, **not with any elaborate words or wisdom.** The emphatic **I** is tinged with irony, as in verse 3. 'I came weaving no syllogisms nor sophisms' (Chrysostom), as so many wandering lecturers on ethics and religion did and were doing still. 'And this was no accident,' Paul continues. 'Nor 2 was it because I could do no better. I had not the least intention of claiming any other knowledge than that of God's revealed purpose ; **I determined to be ignorant of everything except Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ the crucified.'** The startling paradox of a Christ or messiah who had been **crucified** as he had just stated (i. 17-24), was the one thing worth knowing and declaring ; to proclaim this effectively as the effective

3 power of God, one would be wise to ignore any other theme, realizing also that it was far too serious to be played with. He had not visited Corinth with anything of the easy confidence and glib self-assurance of a casual lecturer on the philosophy of religion, relying **on any plausible arguments of 'wisdom'** to commend a scheme of the higher spiritual life. Rather he had chosen to rely on what Aristotle once said it was absurd to expect from any rhetorician, namely cogent proof or demon-
4 stration (*Nikom. Ethics*, i. 3). Only, he adds, the proof was supplied by **the Spirit and its power,** not by his own native wits and cleverness. The first time he speaks of the Spirit to
5 the Corinthians as to the Thessalonians is in connexion with **power.** Indeed the two words are practically a hendiadys. It is this **power** of God, not of human skill in logic or eloquence, which produces solid convictions of **faith**; here and throughout the letter (iii. 23, xv. 57) Paul gladly celebrates, in Milton's phrase, 'what he works, and what he suffers to be wrought with high providence in his Church.' Cicero had criticized the average moralists of the day for their love of fine, captivating phrases which roused no enthusiasm and produced no lasting effect on heart or conscience. 'Their poor little syllogisms,' he wrote in the *De Finibus* (iv. 31), 'only prick like pins; even if they persuade the mind, they effect no change of heart, and the listeners go away just as they came.' It had not been so when the apostolic gospel, charged with power divine, was declared at Corinth.

2 **To be ignorant of everything** (literally, 'to know nothing') was a phrase which for Greeks meant, 'I was to have no philosophy'—none, Paul explains, except the gospel as the
3 sole religious wisdom for men. So far from his mission at Corinth having been due to his own organizing powers and preaching abilities, so far from having undertaken it in high spirits and easy self-confidence, he now confesses that he had come to them full of self-distrust, with an overpowering sense of incapacity or **weakness** (i. 27), which was more than physical,
5 even with a **trembling fear** of proving unequal to the task. Such had been his consciousness of inadequacy as one responsible to God (2 Cor. vii. 15), indeed, that (Acts xviii. 9) he had on one

occasion required direct divine encouragement to proceed with the mission. Ever since leaving Macedonia (2 Thess. i. 7, iii. 1–2, 1 Thess. iii. 7) he had felt thwarted and troubled by **perverse and evil men.** He was worried over the Macedonian churches, night and day. All this had made him anxious and diffident on reaching Corinth. Yet, he now reflects, it was providential (i. 14). It only served to bring out the convincing power of the message with which he had been entrusted (i. 27).

> He that of greatest works is finisher
> Oft does them by the weakest minister.

God must have intended the faith of the Corinthians to rest unmistakably upon revelation, not on any adroit human pleading or course of sermons but on his own **power.** Though miracles were certainly among the notes of an apostle, to which Paul himself refers in connexion with the Corinthian mission (2 Cor. xii. 12), more than miracles, in the specific sense of the term, is covered by **the power of God.**

From the aspect of power he now turns to the aspect of wisdom in the gospel ; verses 6–16 are a finished piece of exposition on the source, content, and conditions of real religious **wisdom** for Christians. In one sense it is a digression, but it is a digression which carries forward the main argument. The gospel has a wisdom of its own, but (*a*) this does not belong to the present world, (*b*) it is revealed by God himself, (*c*) and consequently can only be discussed with Christians fully initiated into the revelation. It is a reply to his critics at Corinth which becomes a counter-attack. Some of them claimed to be ‘ perfect ’ in the Hellenistic sense of the term, so mentally equipped by their religious philosophy and discipline of mystical enthusiasm that they possessed a real knowledge of things divine, past, present, and future, which made them free not only to discard, or at any rate to develop, Paul's elementary emphasis upon the messianic interpretation of the cross and the historical revelation of the gospel, but to sit loose to certain moral restrictions which were binding, as they considered, only upon the immature. All this emerges more fully as he proceeds. For the moment he is concerned to uphold the specific character of his gospel as the one revelation of God's wisdom or saving plan, with a cosmic range and scope of its own. The gospel, which is against any philosophy or wisdom of the present world, has nevertheless a wisdom of its own (6–12).

The mental impetus of Christianity, which is to be felt in this claim, is reflected at various points of the letter. To take seriously the belief that Jesus is the Lord or Christ involved what moderns describe as a philosophy of the world-order; it implied a fresh outlook upon the past and the future of the universe, as that is included in the saving purpose of God. Hence the reference here to the coming of Christ into the world-order, and the argument at the end of the letter about the dénouement which results from the resurrection of Christ. As it happens, the larger interest of the letter lies in problems of moral insight, with the requisite grasp of principles involved. Yet these principles are bound up with a realization of the supernatural issues of the faith. As in the teaching of Jesus, so here, ethical applications go back to a religious basis, which has to be thought out. In First Corinthians Paul is less concerned with this fundamental truth, on the whole, than in such letters as those to the Galatians, Romans, and Colossians. Nevertheless he insists that any problem, however local or practical, must be related to the distinctive revelation of the Cross. The focus of moral vision lies in the central perception of that saving, decisive Action, and Christians are summoned to realize this. While saving faith is within reach of the humblest and least intelligent, it is no mere emotional experience or mystical rapture which is outside the sphere of thought and wide reflection. Coleridge once protested against the 'most mischievous and very popular mis-belief that whatever is not quite simple cannot be of necessary belief, or among the fundamental articles or essentials of Christian faith,' as though, 'forsooth, truth needful for all men must be quite simple and easy and adapted to the capacity of all. . . . But surely the more rational inference would be that the faith which is to save the whole man must have its roots and justifying grounds in the very depths of our being. He who can read the writings of the apostles, John and Paul, without finding in almost every page a confirmation of this, must have looked at them, as at the sun in an eclipse, through blackened glasses' (*Aids to Reflection*, aphorism xviii.). Paul's immediate interest, however, is not to show how faith implies what may be termed a theology or a religious philosophy; it is to insist that any sub-Christian movement, like a theosophy which failed to make the Cross central, or even like the party-spirit at Corinth, was a fatal handicap upon further insight into the real and wide mysteries of the faith.

We do discuss 'wisdom' with those who are mature; only it 6
is not the wisdom of this world or of the dethroned Powers
who rule this world, it is the mysterious Wisdom of God 7
that we discuss, that hidden wisdom which God decreed
from all eternity for our glory. None of the Powers of this 8
world understands (it if they had, they would never have
crucified the Lord of glory). No, as it is written, 9

what no eye has ever seen,
what no ear has ever heard,
what never entered the mind of man,
God has prepared all that for those who love him.

And God has revealed it to us by the Spirit, for the Spirit 10
fathoms everything, even the depths of God.

What human being can understand the thoughts of a man, 11
except the man's own inner spirit?
So too no one understands the thoughts of God,
except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received the Spirit—not the spirit of the 12
world but the Spirit that comes from God, that we may
understand what God bestows upon us.

6 The word for mature (*teleios*) was current in one or two mystical circles of Hellenistic religion as a term for those whose minds were keyed up for the inward knowledge of the deity by ascetic discipline; in Philo, as in the cults, it also denoted those who were initiated. Some have supposed that Paul

employs it in this technical sense. But here, as elsewhere (see iii. 1, 2, xiv. 20, Phil. iii. 12), it is **mature** as opposed to childish or undeveloped. The metaphor was common among the Stoics ever since the days of Pythagoras, but this antithesis does not occur in the Hellenistic cult-religions. What **mature** means, Paul explains later (iii. 1, 2). Meantime he distinguishes the Christian **wisdom,** which he and his colleagues have in mind or on their lips, as a self-revelation of God by the Spirit. It is **the story of the cross** as the story of Christ Jesus our **Wisdom**
7 (i. 18–30), and it is **mysterious** or hidden for all but Christians (Col. ii. 2–3). Chrysostom observes that a mystery 'is what is proclaimed everywhere but is not understood by those who have not the right judgement; it is revealed not by cleverness, but by the holy Spirit, as far as it is possible for us to receive it.' Before making the same point, Paul asserts that the revelation in the cross, so far from being a secondary or transient element in the gospel, belongs to its eternal essence. He had already said that **when the world with all its wisdom failed to know God in his wisdom, God resolved to save 'believers' by the Cross.** But this must not be supposed to mean that the Cross was an afterthought. It had been **decreed from all eternity**; it was God's original, eternal purpose, designed to culminate in **our glory** (which Locke, with oddly prosaic mind, took as a reference to the apostolic honour of preaching the high gospel). The saving, glorious relationship of the faithful to God belongs to his creative purpose. Later on, the apostle sets the **glory** of **the spiritual body** at the end as a foil to the degradation and defeat of the evil Powers (xv. 24–26, 40–42). For him **glory** is often 'sovereign grace o'er sin abounding,' as well as the ethereal radiance of the divine nature and presence. In our epistle this is not worked out, as it is in Romans viii. 17–30, where **to share his glory** or **to be glorified** is his aim of creative design for the faithful. Here only two items are noted. One is the present experience of this glory. It is more than a merely eschatological hope (1 Thess. ii. 12, 2 Thess. ii. 14), for the position of Christians to-day is already a preliminary stage of glory. This is implied in i. 24–28, and in their possession of the divine revelation (ii. 9–10, 2 Cor. iii. 9–10, Rom. viii. 17–30). It is

bound up with their immediate experience of Christ (and this is the second item) as **the Lord of glory,** a term which is first used in 8
later Judaism for God or the messiah at the end (Enoch xxvii. 3–5), and which is now filled with the startling truth of glory through suffering. The dynamic power of God's glory was shown in the resurrection of the Lord (Rom. vi. 4), as it will be in the resurrection of his followers. But the same power makes him **the Lord of glory** over his own already. Afterwards, Paul could tell the Corinthians that his gospel was one of **the glory of Christ** (2 Cor. iv. 6) now effective within the darkened chaos of human life.

In his apocalyptic vision of the cross, Paul sees supernatural 6
Powers of evil at work, making a misguided effort to crush the Lord of glory. It had only ended in their dethronement, for 7
under God the resurrection had crippled the sway of these dark spirits, who would be finally overthrown at the second Coming (xv. 24 f.). Any profound truth enters the mind of man, fringed with mystery, and in these days the supernatural was linked to contemporary views of anti-divine angels or æons, hostile to the soul. It was partly to secure deliverance from bondage to such astrological potentates, or lords of the universe, that many sought in some cults to procure union with a deity here by asceticism or sacramental fusion, thus, at death, to pass back safe to the upper world by means of magic passwords and rites. The present passage yields a passing glimpse into a set of strange ideas which are reflected in other connexions (e.g. Col. ii. 14, 15, Phil. ii. 9, 10), showing how some such belief had been incorporated in messianic schemes of prophecy about Christ. The apostle is saying what the Fourth evangelist said more simply when he spoke about **the Prince of this world** being overthrown at and by his very triumph over Jesus in the crucifixion. Sometimes this is described as a phase of mythology in the primitive Christian mind. But there is nothing mythological about the purpose of God, as Paul understood it. **The Lord of glory** was no figure of apocalyptic dreams. The mission of Jesus Christ was real and decisive ; it had taken place in history. Instead of the crucifixion being a defeat for God, it was a triumph, as the era of the Spirit proved. This is

his point here. Later on, the story was elaborated more mythologically, as we find in the *Ascension of Isaiah* and the epistles of bishop Ignatius, where the Powers are represented as so stupid that they missed or permitted the entry of a dis-
8 guised Christ into the world. It should be needless to say that, in this curious echo of his popular preaching, Paul is not exonerating the actual murderers of Jesus by attributing their crime to the unconscious influence of dæmonic powers; even in viewing the crucifixion as the fourth Act in the divine Drama, he knew, as indeed he had told the Thessalonians not long before, that **the Jews murdered the Lord Jesus.**

Paul looks forward then to the Day of the Lord (i. 8) as transcending the ideas in which he had been trained by Jewish rabbinism; it was no longer the hour when Israel would be awarded supremacy over the gentiles by the Lord, but the final interposition of God in history, which alone lent meaning to the present. Beside this outlook, the hopes of popular messianism faded into unimportance. Even apocalyptic dreams, with their half-despairing outlook on the evil present, were superseded. In the Cross God had decisively encountered the evil Powers, releasing, as we say, a new and lasting power of life in Christ which was soon to triumph (' soon ' being the primitive way of saying ' certain '). Such an expectation, based on a divine Act which was done once and for all in history and which nevertheless was initiated above history, reset the entire vision of what was to be. It is this conviction which the apostle is endeavouring to express in the present passage, with its cosmic, supernatural focus.

9 We Christians, he adds, understand how in God's wise, strange, and good providence, **the Lord of glory** was thus **crucified for our glory,** i.e. to grant us an immediate as well as a future participation in his saving purpose for mankind. Have we not Scripture for this? And he quotes a passage from his textbook. Its source is obscure. Origen thought it was taken from the Apocalypse of Elijah, but the Coptic fragments of that scripture which have turned up in Egypt do not contain the words. It is not unlikely to be a free adaptation of some words in the cry of a post-exilic prophet (in Isa. lxiv. 4):

No ear has ever heard, no eye has ever seen,
the mighty deeds that thou wilt do for those who look to thee.

In the Septuagint the closing words run, 'those who await his mercy.' Paul's change of the phrase, like the similar alteration in James i. 12, is due to his stress upon love to God, either as the faculty for insight into any divine mysteries, such as the meaning of the Cross in the cosmic order, or as an expression for the loyal devotion which is the other side of their election (i. 2–3, xvi. 22, Rom. viii. 28). In any case he is thinking of a revelation already made. Some rabbis interpreted the Isaianic stanza to mean bliss in heaven, but the Christian apostle, with the Cross standing out in history, adds triumphantly, after the long sentence of 6–9, that **God has** already **revealed to us** what he had promised and prepared. The future has begun to be; 10 the life that led up to the Cross, and that is flowing from the Cross through the Church, is experience as well as expectation. A Wisdom-book like Ecclesiasticus (i. 10) described how God granted his wisdom to all men and bestowed her on 'those who love him.' Paul is in line with this thought, identifying **those who love God** with those who believe and receive his supreme gift in the Christ who had been crucified. Love to him is the condition of entering into the revelation of the Spirit, not acute insight, not even patient expectation of some bliss to be. A fine meditation upon this closes the *Proslogion* (xxv, xxvi.) of Anselm.

There is indeed insight, but it is the insight of experience. 11 A new faculty of vision into the deep, high **thoughts of God** is bestowed upon those who accept his revelation on his own terms, for the Spirit which is conscious of the innermost divine life imparts this knowledge to the receptive. Paul never raises the subtle question of disinterested love. 'Though God is to be loved without any thought of reward,' Bernard of Clairvaux remarks in his *Liber de diligendo Deo* (vii.), 'yet he is not loved without reward; the reward of love is the possession of the beloved object.' For Paul this is **Christ Jesus our Wisdom** (i. 30). But he expresses the truth here in other terms. Three times over he claims to impart a secret truth or special intuition

of the latter days, revealed to him (xv. 51). Here **the mysterious or hidden wisdom** which has been *revealed by the Spirit* is not confined to some disclosure of the End, however ; it includes the dealings and discipline of life under the Spirit which lead up to the End, the self-revelation of God in Christ. Elsewhere (e.g. in 2 Cor. iii. 7 f.) he still speaks of this in terms of **glory** : ' **We are being** changed or **transformed, passing from one glory to another**,' all being due to **the Lord the Spirit.** The self-manifestation of the divine **glory** or character is acting upon our nature at present. But here the idea of glory is dropped,
12 and the emphasis falls upon the cognate thought (see xiii. 9, 12) of insight into the divine mind or **the depths** (plans, counsels) **of God.** For this conviction there was some preparation already in the deeper mysticism of Hellenistic piety, where ' knowledge ' had ceased to mean the human mind applying itself to the things of God, and where a divine initiative was propounded as the basis of any insight (i. 5). In the *Hermetica* (i. 31), for example, the deity ' desires to be known and is made known to his own.' Some of the Corinthians may have been familiar with this new type of religious teaching. But Paul's distinctive plea is that to be really receptive of the true divine wisdom or ' knowledge ' (i. 5) requires more than any cult of the day offered. By this time ' knowledge ' or *gnosis* included revealed truths of man's origin and destiny, conveyed through a sort of nature-mysticism in rites. Some votaries of the popular cults would sincerely say, with Plutarch in his tract against Epicureanism (21), ' what delights us at our religious feasts is not the wine or the cooked food, but good hope and the belief that God is present with us.' In view of this, as well as of the Jewish hope, Paul here reiterates the conviction that the supreme reception of divine truth depends on willingness to understand God in the story of the cross.

The climax follows in 13–16. So far from the cross being a tragic event, or a shameful affair, which has no central significance for spiritual revelation, it is supremely vital, and only those who see in it a **Lord of glory,** with his own **thoughts** and purposes revealed there, are competent to speak about God at all.

And this is what we discuss, using language taught by no 13
human wisdom but by the Spirit. We interpret what is
spiritual in spiritual language. The unspiritual man rejects 14
these truths of the Spirit of God ; to him they are ' sheer
folly,' he cannot understand them. And the reason is, that
they must be read with the spiritual eye. The spiritual man, 15
again, can read the meaning of everything ; and yet no
one can read what he is. For ***who ever understood the*** 16
thoughts of the Lord, so as to give him instruction ? **No**
one. Well, our thoughts are Christ's thoughts.
we have mind of Christ.

The Spirit opens the lips of the inspired man, giving him
not only the right message from the Lord and the right to share
it with others, but also the right expressions. 'As God's deep 13
mind or purpose is thus revealed to us, so **we** responsible
speakers for him (verse 6) **discuss** it in terms of the divine
Spirit, **interpreting** (Gen. xl. 8, Dan. v. 9) or imparting the
mysteries of **what is spiritual (what God bestows upon us**
Christians) in spiritual language.' The revelation of his **mysterious Wisdom** (verse 7) is to be thought of and spoken of
intelligently. The English version, 'comparing spiritual things
with spiritual,' reflects a possible meaning of the Greek, as
though prophets and apostles examined their revelations with
care, in the endeavour to understand more fully the genuine
content of their higher knowledge. This might be one use to
which **the gift of distinguishing spirits** (xii. 10) was put. But
the context points rather to language. Another interpretation,
'communicating spiritual things to spiritual men' is less
probable ; it raises a point which is first taken up in the decisive assertion (14–16) that any 'wisdom,' however mystical 14
and speculative, whether inside or outside the Church, which
does not recognize the central significance of the Cross, has no
eye for the truths of God. The reason is that Christ is the true 15
Wisdom, and those who share his life, with his outlook on the
world, are incomprehensible to acute outsiders. No human
being can understand another's inmost thoughts and motives
(verse 11), least of all when the latter's thoughts are **the**
thoughts of the Lord himself, as the man reads the meaning of

everything from the Centre, i.e. the Cross. In one aspect the thought of the sentence corresponds to the core of the prophetic consciousness, i.e. unreasoning but not unreasonable convictions which are uttered by one who believes himself to be speaking of God from the centre.

In this epigram there is a side-allusion to the Greek ideal of the good, sound man who alone possesses the true standards of life. The man who is merely clever and cunning, as Plato taught (*Republic*, 409), 'cannot recognize soundness of character, since he has no pattern of honesty within himself. Vice knows vice, but it cannot know virtue too, whereas virtue in an educated nature learns in process of time to know both itself and vice as well. It is the good man, not the bad, who is wise' in reading human life. But the apostle is doing more than insisting that moral qualities are essential to spiritual insight. Nor is he claiming that the true Christian is above criticism. Over and again he argues that Christians help one another by thoughtful criticism. Mutual advice and frank reproof are essential to health of soul. Even public opinion must be regarded; a Christian ought to be conscious of what honest, high-minded outsiders may say and think of his behaviour or of his speech. The people he has in mind are (as in iv. 3) captious critics of his gospel, who took him to task as though they could improve upon the apostolic witness to the Lord. They professed they could see nothing in it; the whole thing
16 was sheer **folly**! Our wisdom, he retorts, does not 'abide your question.' You and your sympathizers can no more fathom or appreciate our message than you could offer suggestions to the Lord himself, whose mind we share and express. As usual he cites Scripture, once more from Isaiah (xl. 13, 14), in the shape of a saying to which he recurs in Rom. xi. 34 from a different angle. Paul's Greek Bible translated 'Spirit' here by 'mind,' in the sense of active purpose or **thoughts**, to which it approximated in the *Hermetica*, where it is a divine gift for the perfect or mature at baptism, as they are taken inside the realm of the spiritual. It is no new or unexampled thing for him to claim that his apostolic witness to the Lord was the one true interpretation of the facts (i. 6 f., iv. 1 f., xv. 14 f.). The striking thing

in the present sentence is the charge that those who offered a new theology of mystical insight, apart from **the story of the cross,** were no better than a man who profanely dared to **give** some **instructions** to **the Lord** by propounding an up-to-date version of revelation. He makes no claim that he or any other apostle could fathom the mysteries of God, but he is sure that they were in touch with the real 'nous' or spiritual mind, i.e. **Christ's thoughts,** as revealed in the cross, and that this represented a truth which any further knowledge of God would only confirm and deepen.

It was Paul who introduced the word **spiritual** into the 14 vocabulary of Christianity, and this is the epistle where it occurs most frequently. Aristotle had coined the Greek term *psychicos* to describe the higher interests of the soul, or *psyche,* as opposed to what was lower or sensual in human nature. When **spiritual** arose, it lowered *psychicos* to a term of comparative reproach in some circles; 'natural' is misleading as an English equivalent, and the nearest synonym we have for it in the present connexion is something like **unspiritual,** unilluminated, or unrenewed. **Spiritual** was not coined by Paul; though it did not occur in his Greek Bible, it was being used in some circles of Hellenistic mysticism, where the spirit, not the soul, was now regarded as the supreme element in human nature, the divine or immortal spirit being supposed to enter and possess the initiate. There is no real evidence of any definite contrast between **spiritual** and 'psychical,' however, prior to Paul, and even he never connects the soul, or *psyche,* with evil or matter. The Christian nuance he attaches to the terms (here and in xiv. 37, xv. 44 f.) is indicated in the following passage, where, from the general statement on the **wisdom** of the gospel and the spiritual conditions for learning it, the apostle passes to a particular application. Why did not I tell you all this during my mission, you may ask? Why did I leave it to Apollos after me to initiate you into such higher truths? After explaining his method of procedure (iii. 1–8), he turns with a grave warning to those who are at present working at Corinth (9–15), that their teaching must be in keeping with the original gospel, or it will be the worse for them, if not for their hearers (16–20).

iii.

1 But I could not discuss things with you, my brothers, as spiritual
persons; I had to address you as worldlings, as mere
2 babes in Christ. I fed you with milk, not with solid food.
You were not able for solid food, and you are not able even
3 now; you are still worldly. For with jealousy and quarrels
in your midst, are you not worldly, are you not behaving
4 like ordinary men? When one cries, 'I belong to Paul,'
and another, 'I belong to Apollos,' what are you but men
5 of the world? Who is Apollos? Who is Paul? They are
simply used by God to give you faith, each as the Lord
assigns his task.

6 I did the planting, Apollos did the watering,
But it was God who made the seed grow.
7 So neither planter nor waterer counts,
But God alone who makes the seed grow.

8 (Still, though planter and waterer are on the same level, each will get his own wage for the special work that he has done.)

1 In a real sense all Christians had the Spirit, but converts at
first might be so unformed and immature that the Spirit did
not yet control their personalities fully. Paul describes them
as worldlings, a strong term which at once he qualifies by the
more hopeful **as mere babes in Christ**, capable of growth into
spiritual or mature personalities. The figure was familiar in the
ancient world; thus Pythagoras called his elementary pupils
2 **babes** and the advanced **mature** (as Paul does in ii. 6). The
figure of **milk** and **solid food** is also common in writers like Philo and Epictetus for elementary and advanced instruction. What Paul means by the former is suggested in v. 9 f. and xv. 3 (**first and foremost**). The **solid food** is the '**wisdom**' to which he has already referred—not, he implies, the so-called solid teaching which these other men offer. But, even after some years of membership in the Church, Christians may be childish and **still** unfit to understand the deeper meaning of their faith, if, like the Corinthians, they lack moral qualities. In Galatians v. 25–vi. 1 he notes that really **spiritual persons** are distinguished by humility and consideration for each other

in the fellowship ; here he notes party-spirit and quarrelsomeness as indications of a **worldly** character which now and then lapses to an unspiritual plane where it is unable to appreciate the inner issues of the divine love at the heart of '**wisdom.**' In the Church, he suggests, the knowledge of God is not a matter of mere knowing or cleverness, gained from one teacher ; it is not a speculative adventure, on which one may pride oneself, but a spiritual perception which requires moral humility and true fellowship (see the notes on Phil. i. 9, ii. 2 f., Eph. iii. 17, 18). The two handicaps of party-spirit are (*a*) that in attending to one leader as against another, or in exalting one teacher for his gifts, there is a risk of missing the supreme Lord who is the one source and object of faith, and (*b*) also that it fosters a spirit of friction in the community. When Dr. Arnold's pupils left Rugby, he used to warn them gravely 'against party-spirit, against giving to any human party, sect, society, or cause, that undivided sympathy and service which he held to be due only to the one party and cause of good men under their Divine Head' (Stanley's *Life of Arnold*, ch. iv.). This is the apostle's point in verses 4–9, that **God alone counts.** At present he tells the Corinthians that the **jealousy and quarrels** (Rom. xiii. 13) bred by their partisanship are a form of worldliness, which renders them, for all their pretensions, incapable of deeper spiritual insight. So precocious, so eager and excited over spiritual gifts ? Why, you are not spiritual at all ! Party-spirit (i. 10) had been the bane of the old Greek democracies ; it was still the bane of philosophy, where rival adherents of this or that teacher quarrelled bitterly. Hesiod long ago (in *Works and Days*, 195 f.) had described such jealousy in the social order as 'brawling, rejoicing in evil, and of hateful countenance.' From this disintegrating temper the Corinthians had been called out into membership of a community where the vital Spirit was humble fellowship. Indeed the **worldly** life, for Paul, practically amounted to the loveless life, though he never uses this exact phrase. To carry the old spirit of party into the new relationship was to behave, he says, **like ordinary men of the world,** instead of realizing what it meant to be **mature in Christ.** The desire for a complete personality, all-round and fully developed, is a strong motive in human character, when life is taken seriously, and the Stoics called it 'maturity.' Paul called it possession by the Spirit or **spiritual**, re-stamping a current term, as he often had to do, with its specific Christian significance. Occasionally he did use **mind** or *nous*, as Plutarch afterwards did, for the element in man which is higher than *psyche*, or soul (see ii. 16), but his more common antithesis was between **spiritual** and psychical (or **worldly, unspiritual**) as here, meaning by the latter term not simply a man who relied on his unaided faculties of reason, perception, and intuition, but one who was out of touch with the ethical qualities essential to the vital Spirit of love. Consequently **jealousy and quarrels** are ranked as expressions of the 'flesh,' or lower nature. The world was too much with such people, even though they did belong in a sense to the order of the Spirit. While 'carnal' is too strong and narrow a term for 'fleshly,' or **worldly**, in this connexion, Paul does not hesitate to oppose this mode of life to that of the **mature in Christ.**

4 From the tone of his references to Apollos and himself, it is plain that neither was to be held responsible for the bad spirit of their respective partisans, who had made heroes out of two men simply doing the work of God, without putting themselves forward as rivals or oracles. No doubt it is true that in religious propaganda men are likely to be effective as they are obviously disinterested. Appeals and rebukes and advice come with power as they issue from one who is not seeking reputation or rank. To do God's tasks and to seek his interests, not any personal dignity, is one condition of influence. Paul implies
5 this, but his main concern is to urge that he and Apollos, who had followed him in the mission, must never be regarded as anything more than agents of God to convey his gift of **faith**—faith, not philosophic wisdom, the faith in God from which alone any real wisdom grows. Such had been their own estimate of themselves. If the Corinthians would only see the mission in this light, and understand that **God alone counts in**
6 **Church-work**, they would never fall into cliques. The metaphor
7 of **planting** is used by Jesus alone (in the N.T.). The two gardeners get their respective rewards, Paul adds; though they

are on the same level, their wage may vary, as Jesus always
taught. But verse 8 is really a parenthesis, except to suggest 8
that reward means work properly done. The thought of
verses 5–7 is carried on in the opening words of the next
paragraph (9–15).

**We work together in God's service ; you are God's field to be 9
planted, God's house to be built. In virtue of my commis- 10
sion from God, I laid the foundation of the house like an
expert master-builder ; it remains for another to build on
this foundation. Whoever he is, let him be careful how he
builds. The foundation is laid, namely Jesus Christ, and no 11
one can lay any other. On that foundation anyone may 12
build gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, 13
but in every case the nature of his work will come out ;
the Day will show what it is, for the Day breaks in fire, and
the fire will test the work of each, no matter what that
work may be.**

**If the structure raised by any man survives, 14
he will be rewarded ;
if a man's work is burnt up, 15
he will be a loser—
and though he will be saved himself,
he will be snatched from the very flames.**

God's is the emphatic word in all three clauses of the sen- 9
tence. In the first the Greek might mean, we are God's co-
adjutors or fellow-workers (' labourers together with God,'
A.V.), but the context (5 f.) rather favours **we work together
in God's service** or under him, as jointly commissioned by him
for our respective tasks. Naturally Paul does not intend to
suggest that no converts were made after he left Corinth, but
only that Apollos went on with the work which Paul had
started, and in the same spirit, even though some of the
younger man's converts had become his partisans. The meta- 10
phor for the tasks now changes from agriculture to architec-
ture. The warning to Christian ministers upon the serious
character of their responsibilities is expressed figuratively, but

the figure is confused in its details; Paul is not always very happy in working out an illustration (see on ix. 27). The first point is indeed clear. In ancient architecture stability was the primary consideration. Security against floods and storms meant that the **foundation** of the structure must be carefully chosen, laid on rock and not on a sandy soil. At Corinth Paul claims to have done this, **like an expert** (literally 'wise'—you see the kind of 'wisdom' I employed in my mission to you!) **master-builder,** or practical architect, who knows his business, working **in God's service** or, as he now puts it, **in virtue of my commission from God,** with God's authority to render the work effective (i. 1, ii. 4, 5). **Commission** is literally 'grace' (as in Rom. xii. 3), in its derived sense of the divine power which accounted for the genuine results of the mission. As in xv. 9 f., he disclaims personal credit, and at the same time claims that his work had been no private venture. There may, further, be a side-allusion to criticisms of his apostolic credentials levelled by some of the Peter-clique who held that Paul could not supply the foundation truth of the gospel. After what he had said about Apollos, there can hardly be an oblique reference to the Alexandrian in the stern, general warning to **another, whoever**
11 **he is.** Paul maintains that the Church's one **foundation** is what he himself had **laid.** Let those who are following up his work beware lest they build something flimsy on the solid basis of the apostolic gospel. He is not resenting the fact that others are working in the mission, but anxious about the quality of their superstructure. For the moment he has turned to the teachers, leaving the question of party-spirit in the Church.
12 Epictetus (ii. 15) afterwards used this very metaphor in warning an individual to build up his character upon solid principles: 'will you not begin by laying the foundation, by enquiring whether your decision is sound or unsound, and so proceed to build up on it what is firm and secure? If you lay a rotten and shaky foundation, you will be unable to build even a small structure.' Paul's corporate and figurative description is more impressive than lucid, however. The details are loosely put, for if **gold, silver, precious stones** represent solid material, the first two at least are decorative, though

precious stones may mean marble blocks or jewels which in Oriental fantasy were used for building (Rev. xxi. 19). **Hay** 13 **and straw,** employed for roofing, were familiar in descriptions of the judgement Day (Mal. iv. 1, Enoch xlviii. 9), but the apostle is not thinking of judgement Fire purging the nobler materials of gold and silver (Mal. iii. 3), nor does he suggest, though this might have been expected, that the Day tests the converts made by these teachers. The imminent **Day** of judgement (this is implied in the very word, i. 8 and iv. 3), when God tests the work done on his House, will show the value of this or that builder's contribution. What the true 14 builder's reward would be, is never hinted. It was certainly more than approval (iv. 5). Firmly as Paul held to the grace of God, to whom all credit went (xv. 5, etc.), he never abandoned his pharisaic conviction that those who were bound to serve the Lord as best they could received a recompense at the end (ix. 14, 2 Cor. v. 10).

The reverse, and ominous, side is, first of all, that of 15 an unsatisfactory prophet or teacher, not one whose work is better than his character, but one whose character is not so flimsy as his contribution to the upbuilding of the Church. **He himself will** have a hair's-breadth escape, **saved** not by his achievements, of which he is so proud, but in spite of them.

Then Paul pauses to recall a more ominous possibility still. There are some who ruin themselves by their methods and message, not simply poor and pretentious builders, but men who outrage the very heart of the gospel in the Church by attaching Christians to themselves, instead of recognizing that the souls of men belong to God. He thinks of the Building under the aspect of God's temple, for the sin of these party-leaders is the sin of sacrilege. Probably he has also in mind teachers who held that the spiritual life was superior to moral laws, and that sexual irregularity, for example, was not a sin (vi. 12 f.) for the saints. Besides these ultra-spiritualists, there may have been leaders of the local church who condoned moral scandals for other reasons (see on v. 1 f.). All such teaching, he holds, violates the sanctity of God's Church. A sudden, stern word is interjected (16, 17), for those who tolerate such propaganda, as well as for its agents. Any man who thus tampers with the Church is on the way to be ruined; other errorists may be saved, though their work perishes, but 'him shall God destroy.'

16 **Do you not know you are God's temple and that God's Spirit**
17 **dwells within you? God will destroy anyone who would destroy God's temple, for God's temple is sacred—and that is what you are.**

16 **Do you not know?** Have I not told you already (2 Cor. vi. 16f.)? As the old hope of apocalyptic faith had been now fulfilled in the gospel (ii. 9 f.), so had another hope been realized, viz. that God would make his people in the last days his own sanctuary. The Greek word for **temple** (*naos*) is derived from the verb to 'reside' (*naiein*); the god inhabits his shrine. The indwelling Spirit of God constitutes the Church (xii. 1–13), and as such it
17 is **sacred. Sacred** or consecrated to God (i. 2), **that is what you are,** in your corporate fellowship. Corinth had many a temple whose precincts and contents were inviolable; Paul sees in the fellowship of the saints the one and only **temple of God,** so powerful is his consciousness of the divine presence. It had no buildings to be damaged, but no one could injure it with impunity by any profane intrusion of self-interest. As love and holiness are one in the nature of God himself (i. 2, 30, x. 22, xi. 27 f.), so they must be in the nature of those who belonged to him as his saints. The moral and mental responsibilities of this sacred position are urged elsewhere upon individuals (e.g. vi. 2–8, 20, vii. 19); here the apostle views them from the side of the Church as God's own sacred shrine. Desecration of a temple was a capital crime in the ancient world, which, it was believed, the god himself might avenge. What sacrilege or violation exactly meant in the case of the Christian Church is to be gathered from the context. Paul merely hints that **anyone who would** try to **destroy God's temple** (we require to say 'would,' since Paul could not have allowed that anyone was able to overthrow the Church) was liable to be ruined by

God, destroyed by the divine Power or Spirit which dwells within it (xi. 29).

As he draws to a close, he recalls what he had said at the outset (i. 17–31). The first of the two final words (18–20) is a stern warning to the leaders and votaries of speculative 'wisdom'; the second is a glowing recall for the whole church to its full privileges (21–23).

Let no one deceive himself about this; whoever of you imagines 18
that he is wise with this world's wisdom must become a
'fool,' if he is really to be wise. For God ranks this world's 19
wisdom as 'sheer folly.' It is written, *He seizes the wise in*
their craftiness, **and again,** *The Lord knows that the reason-* 20
ing of the wise is futile.

The sense of mental ability and acuteness is apt to breed an 18
overbearing treatment of those who are less intelligent, and
also a conceit which blinds men to the realities of life. The
former danger Paul handles later on (viii. 1–2). The latter is
his immediate concern here, the self-deception of those who
pride themselves on being so 'wise' in this mundane order, and
who yet miss the humble, real '**wisdom**' of the gospel. You
sneer, this is merely Paul's private opinion? No, it is God's 19
judgement, there is scripture for it. And he cites a couple of
words from his book of texts, the first of which is a phrase
from some version of Job (v. 12, 13) about God seizing or
foiling crafty schemers, while the second is adapted from one 20
of the Psalms (xciv. 11), Paul making it more pointed by changing 'men' to **the wise.** *Craftiness* implies that Paul felt the church to be seriously endangered by this 'wisdom' propaganda, whether it was the Christ-party or another which was responsible. The indefinite **whoever** (as in verse 10, iv. 18, xv. 12, xvi. 22) is really definite; Paul will not name the individuals, though he knows or suspects who they are. That they had plans and a concerted purpose is put beyond doubt by the subsequent attack on their adroit, subtle methods in 2 Cor. iv. 2, where Paul, with adherents of this group in mind, indignantly protests, **I do not go about** my work for God **craftily.**

He now drops his curt tone as he turns to the whole church (21–23), recalling what he had said in i. 31. 'Why boast about the respective reputations and abilities of men like us leaders? We are all here for your sake and service, and you belong to none of us but to the Lord himself.'

21 **So you must not boast about men. For all belongs to you;**
22 **Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life, death, the present**
23 **and the future—all belongs to you; and you belong to Christ, and Christ to God.**

21 '**All belongs to you**—not as Stoics since Zeno have claimed that "all belongs to the wise," who by his moral zeal and
22 knowledge is free and lord of all things. **All** is yours as you are Christ's, thanks to the grace of God.' The whole breathing **world** of God is followed in this rapture by four terms used in a later lyrical outburst (of Rom. viii. 38); **life,** which offers growth and service, **death** which means only a change to perfect bliss (xv. 51–52), **the present** age and **the future.** It has been conjectured that, as Paul does not mention the adherents of the Christ-party (i. 12, 13), the words, **you** all **belong to Christ,** are, as it were, a side-stroke at this group. In any case the apostle is giving the true perspective, in which alone they can realize what they are and have. As they are **the church of God at Corinth** (i. 12), through Christ, he rounds off the vision of
23 their position by adding, **and Christ belongs to God.** What this means he has no call to discuss here or elsewhere in the letter, though incidentally he alludes to it (e.g. in viii. 6, xi. 3, and xv. 28). The sweep of his thought is from **men** to **God.** 'What ease and swiftness and power of wing in this indignant upward flight from the petty conflicts of the Corinthian Church; an upward flight which does not cease till the poor subjects of contention, though he himself was one of them, seem lost like grains of sand beneath the bending sky!'[1]

The positive description of the apostles in their ministry—Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and the rest—which opens the following paragraph (iv. 1–13), swerves into a sudden repudiation of those who were daring to depreciate himself at Corinth (1–5). He protests against undue, hasty criticism as well as against exaggerated ideas of the apostolic ministry. But, as this was more than private opinions, he goes off into an indignant assertion of his position (which echoes ii. 16) at the word **requirement.**

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[1] R. H. Hutton, *Theological Essays*, p. 323.

iv.

This is how you are to look upon us, as servants of Christ and 1
stewards of God's secret truths. Now in this matter of 2
stewards your first requirement is that they must be trust-
worthy. It matters very little to me that you or any human 3
court should cross-question me on this point. I do not even 4
cross-question myself ; for, although I am not conscious of
having anything against me, that does not clear me. It is
the Lord who cross-questions me on the matter. So do not 5
criticize at all ; the hour of reckoning has still to come,
when the Lord will come to bring dark secrets to the light
and to reveal life's inner aims and motives. Then each of
us will get his meed of praise from God.

The apostles are no mystagogues of a Greek cult who initiate 1
adepts into mysteries of saving wisdom through union with
some deity by means of secret rites ; in the service of Christ
who belongs to God, they act as house-**stewards** of God's
mysteries or **secret truths** (ii. 1, 13). For once Paul uses a Greek
term, **servants,** which is common in the gospels. Both it and
steward (generally a trusted slave who managed an estate or
household) were applied by Epictetus to the earnest Cynic
preacher who, as responsible to God, did not shrink from
speaking to people on truths of life which he had received
(iii. 22). 'I am faithful to my task of imparting the stores of 2
the gospel,' Paul declares, 'neither misappropriating them
nor withholding them nor trifling with them, but no one can
pronounce on my personal integrity except the Master of the
House, who alone knows what he has entrusted to his **stewards.'**
With a flash of proud indifference he repudiates the right of 3
any self-constituted inquisitors (ix. 3) at Corinth to examine
his credentials. **Court** is literally 'day' in the sense of judicial

scrutiny, perhaps suggested by **Day** above (iii. 13), while **cross-examine** is a legal word for the preliminary enquiry, when evidence was sifted and probed. Similarly in the English Version ('I am not hereby justified') 'justified' has its ordin-
4 ary juristic sense of being cleared (as in Rom. vi. 7). Favourable or not, what is their verdict to him? Instead of passing hasty judgements on one another, better recollect who is to judge us all at the End for what we have done or left undone.
5 To a Greek the term **Lord** (*kurios*) in this connexion would carry its sub-sense of 'proper authority,' as in Aristotle's *Politics* (iii. 16: 'magistrates who are the valid authorities to decide a case'). Let all stand over till the Lord's court, no **human** tribunal, is in session. **Then,** and not till then, each deserving servant (iii. 8, 14) gets his just **meed of praise from God.** With that word **God** the warning ends, like ii. 1–5 and iii. 21–23.

Reverting to iv. 1–2, he explains how and why he has been arguing against party-spirit in the Church.

6 **Now I have applied what has been said above to myself and Apollos, to teach you . . . that you are not to be puffed up with rivalry over one teacher as against another.**

In deprecating partisanship and factiousness (iii. 4 f., 18 f.), he has tactfully chosen himself **and Apollos,** without mentioning any others, in order to disarm criticism. 'Let no one suppose that we consider ourselves exempt from the risks of party-feeling in leaders and followers, on which I have been reading you a lesson. Only, I have shown you in our case how absurd it is to play off one against another, as if we were rival apostles with programmes of our own, or anything but **servants** and **stewards** alike. That is what I have been trying **to teach you.** We two, at any rate, are an illustration of the baselessness of exalting **one teacher** over **another.**' This is the obvious meaning of the sentence. But between **teach you** and **that** in the Greek five or six words are inserted whose meaning lies beyond recovery. In the original text there were probably five, i.e. *to mê huper ha gegraptai*, literally, 'Not above what is written.' Written by whom? By the Church, in some regulation about equality and brotherhood? By Paul himself in the preceding paragraphs, as if to warn the Corinthians not to estimate himself and Apollos more highly than had been **said above**? So the Port Royal version takes it: 'N'avoir pas d'autres sentiments de vous que ceux que je viens de marquer.' Possibly. But *gegraptai* naturally suggests 'in Scripture'; it has a juridical sound. Indeed, 'not beyond Scripture' looks like a catchword. The Greek fathers thought that it referred to words of Jesus like those in Matt. vii. 1, xx. 26, and Mark x. 43, but *written*, or *scripture*, is too vague and general for any such allusion. Though conjectural emendations of the text have been proposed, none is plausible. We have no clue to these baffling five words, unless it be supposed that they are (*a*) either Paul's protest against a 'biblical' party who considered that Apollos and himself were too high-flying in their exposition of the Bible ('Learn from us that we never go a hand's-breadth beyond Scripture'), or, more probably, his protest (*b*) against some ultra-mystical or speculative group who objected to the methods of himself and Apollos as too biblical, too narrow, in fact, for the higher knowledge or wisdom of the Spirit. In the latter case the point of the obscure words would be: 'Why so strict and scriptural, Paul? We want more of the freedom which soars to heights of illumination, instead of being always careful *not* to go *beyond what is written.*' To which the apostle's retort is that they might learn from the case of himself and his colleague how loyal they were to a revelation of Christ which was scriptural, not speculative. This would amount to a claim that, so far from being old-fashioned and narrow, their method was the sole, sure basis and standard for any adequate apostolic instruction.

In the next outburst, quivering with bitter sarcasm and pathos (7–13), he associates himself with an apostle like Apollos, though Peter is not necessarily excluded. He has in mind the recent communication from the Corinthians, whose language he cites. 'Yes, we poor apostles cut a sorry figure beside you!'

7 **Who singles you out, my brother? What do you possess that has not been given you? And if it was given you, why do**
8 **you boast as if it had been gained, not given? You Corinthians have your heart's desire already, have you? You have heaven's rich bliss already! You have come into your kingdom without us! I wish indeed you had come into your kingdom, so that we could share it with you!**
9 **For it seems to me that God means us apostles to come in at the very end, like doomed gladiators in the arena! We are made a spectacle to the world, to angels and to men!**
10 **We, for Christ's sake, are 'fools'; you in Christ are sensible. We are weak, you are strong; you are honoured,**
11 **we are in disrepute. To this very hour we hunger and thirst, we are ill-clad and knocked about, we are waifs, we**
12 **work for our living; when reviled, we bless; when**
13 **persecuted, we put up with it; when defamed, we try to conciliate. To this very hour we are treated as scum of the earth, the very refuse of the world!**

7 The opening words form one of Paul's deep sayings, but its connexion with the context is not quite clear. Something may have dropped out of the text at this point. I insert **my brother,** in order to show that the apostle for once (as in the rhetorical apostrophes of vii. 16, 21, xv. 36) is dramatically addressing the individual Corinthian or the church as an individual, apparently thrusting at their self-importance and calm assurance in daring to pass judgement upon this teacher and that. The **you** is emphatic. 'Who in the wide world sees anything special in **you**? Who has singled **you** out for this distinguished position of critics? You consider yourselves richly endowed with special gifts of knowledge and discrimination, do you? You plume yourselves on these attainments, as though you had won them by your unaided merits and abilities. You have enough leisure and insight, have you, to criticize those who once served you in the mission? But all you have has been **given you** by God through us apostles, though you seem to think you can do **without us** now, you are so advanced'—
8 blaming them chiefly for failing to honour God properly.

Then, with irony and reproach, he pours out his soul, alluding to what they had written in their letter (see above, p. xv.) to himself. The nearest approach to this caustic description of religious self-satisfaction lies in the prophet John's word to the Christian church at Laodicea (Rev. iii. 17: **you declare, 'I am rich, I am well off, I lack nothing'**). The stinging sarcasm is whetted by recollections of contemporary life, Stoic and Jewish. 'Rich' and 'reigning' were catchwords of the Stoics, ever since Diogenes, whose tomb was shown at Corinth, had taught a Stoic to maintain, 'I alone am rich, I alone reign as king' in the world. The latter term had indeed passed into colloquial Latin, where *basilicus* meant a person of importance. There was also the apocalyptic claim that at the end the saints would reign over the world (vi. 2), coming into their kingdom at last. 'So it has all come about already, you tell me, and **without us** (either, without our co-operation or ahead of us, poor apostles)! Fortunate Corinthians indeed, so comfortable and complacent, able to sit at ease and "talk" about religion as you grow excited over rival leaders and popular preachers, you so exempt from the strain and hardships of life! Alas, how different our plight (9–13)!' Stoics 9
sometimes prided themselves on being a **spectacle** to the gods as they won admiration by defying fate and misfortune, like men in the amphitheatre bearing rough usage. Paul speaks in a tone of manly pathos as he represents himself and his colleagues like **gladiators** (*bestiarii*) who fought with wild beasts (xv. 30–32) at the close of exhibitions; generally they were condemned criminals or prisoners who rarely came out alive. The Greek words at the end originally denoted miserable 13
scapegoats of criminals who were sacrificed to remove the guilt of a city, but they had now become colloquial terms for what was good-for-nothing (**scum**) and **refuse**, the dregs and dung of human life; it is in this sense that they are used here. The intervening contrasts are equally sharp. **Sensible** is the 10
term used in the reproach of 2 Cor. xi. 19 (**you who know so much**); you are not exposed to the ridicule we suffer for preaching the cross! To be **in disrepute** originally meant the disgrace of being disfranchised, one mark of which, in Paul's

12 case, was working **for** his **living,** which Greeks contemned (ix. 4 f.) as beneath the dignity of anyone claiming to be a moral
11 teacher. ' We are not only **waifs** and wanderers, but our very
13 patience and humility are a fresh cause of reproach. Instead of merely abstaining from exasperation and retaliation when we are **defamed, we try to conciliate** or appease our critics by soft answers and friendly appeals, which the proud world regards as a fresh proof that we are poor-spirited creatures, with the slave-ethics of a cringing morality, fit only for mean souls. And all this is going on **to this very hour,** as I write, while you enjoy your ease!' The last word, **world** or humanity, is emphatic. It is **the** present **world,** which is opposed to God (ii. 6 f., xi. 32) on the score of sin and death. The world of the redeemed becomes **the kingdom** where God reigns over the saints in his Church, with his **commands** (vii. 19) in force.

Now comes a quick change of tone (as in Gal. iv. 13); the stormy rapids of sarcasm run into a quieter current (14–21), though at the close he once more speaks severely.

14 I do not write this to make you feel ashamed, but to instruct you
15 as beloved children of mine. You may have thousands to
supervise you in Christ, but you have not more than one
father. It was I who in Christ Jesus became your father by
16 means of the gospel. Then imitate me, I beg of you.
17 To ensure this, I am sending you Timotheus, my beloved and
trustworthy son in the Lord; he will remind you of those
methods in Christ Jesus which I teach everywhere in every
18 church. Certain individuals have got puffed up, have they,
19 as if I were not coming myself? I will come to you before
long, if the Lord wills, and then I will find out from these
puffed up creatures not what their talk but what their power
20 amounts to. For God's Reign does not show itself in talk
21 but in power. Which is it to be? Am I to come to you
with a rod of discipline or with love and a spirit of gentleness?

14 When he thought fit, Paul could tell them that they ought to be **ashamed** (vi. 5, xv. 34), but he disclaims here any personal feeling or desire to humiliate them. All he wants from

them is the child's instinct and desire to be like its **father.** In 15
Eph. v. 1 this motive is run back to their relationship towards God the Father, and there was an early effort (which crept into the Vulgate) to give a pious turn to Paul's appeal by inserting 'as I of Christ' after 'followers of me.' This is indeed what 16
the apostle says in xi. 1, where the idea is specially prominent. Here, however, he is pleading for attention to his fatherly spirit and (as in 1 Thess. ii. 11) instructions rather than to the new-comers. They may **supervise** your Christian life, but they 15
did not bring you into life. The Greek term, used with depreciation also in Gal. iii, 24 f., stamps the interlopers; a *paidagogos* was no very high character, but a common slave who had to look after a lad's behaviour and person, in public and private; if he taught the boy his alphabet, that was all. Hitherto, even in iii. 2 (**I fed you with milk**), Paul has used the metaphor of motherhood in speaking of his churches coming into being (1 Thess. ii. 7, Gal. iv. 19), but spiritual paternity suits his purpose here as he stresses obedience to the instruction which it was a father's duty to give in the home (Eph. vi. 4).

To **ensure** this attention he is sending one true **son** who 17
follows his spiritual father's steps. Except Onesimus the slave (Philem. 10), Timotheus is the only person whom Paul thus calls his spiritual **son.** Dr. Johnson once remarked that more people required to be reminded than instructed. Timotheus, as Paul's commissioner, is to **remind** the Corinthians of Paul's original precepts and principles, which they had been forgetting in their excitement over later evangelists, who propounded novelties out of line with the common faith and order (vii. 17, xi. 16, xiv. 36, xvi. 1). Paul speaks of his 'ways' or **methods** (see above, pp. xxiii., xxvii.) as a rabbi might speak of the *halacha*, practical and oral applications of the divine law on the right way to live, if one was to be right with God. They are not idiosyncrasies of the apostle, but authoritative instructions **in Christ Jesus,** belonging to the Christian Torah (see on xv. 56) of **the gospel,** which are his because he was the first to lay them on the conscience of the Corinthians. It is what he calls elsewhere his **traditions** or **rules** (2 Thess. ii. 15), or **the rule of faith** (Rom. vi. 17).

18 Something, perhaps a hint from the Corinthians at his side, now leads him to anticipate an insolent objection on the part of **certain individuals.** 'So Paul is not coming himself? He is afraid to put in an appearance! He knows he is not on our level. We can go on freely with our teaching.' Or Paul's decision may have been taken as a compliment: 'he feels that we do not require him or any of his counsel.' The latter suits the sequel, where **puffed up** (v. 2) is used of the church as a whole, but the former suits the immediate context better, especially in view of what afterwards transpired (2 Cor. x.–xi.). These recalcitrants were elated at the thought of being let
19 alone. Paul threatens them and their adherents severely: 'I'll soon ascertain what **these** inflated **creatures** amount to. I'll come myself, if God wills.' This qualifies **before long**; **if the Lord wills** is not a pious phrase (see on James iv. 15). He made plans, but he was in holy orders, in the sense of knowing
20 that he might be allowed to go or hindered from going. **God's Reign** here (see on 13 and Rom. xiv. 17) is the Christian order
21 already in force within the Church. The **spirit of gentleness** covers more than a generous attitude to moral failures in life (Gal. vi. 1); it is love which does not require to be stern or even forgiving when the fellowship is affectionate and loyal. Paul had felt this quality deeply in the character of Jesus Christ. He appeals to it in a similar connexion later (2 Cor. x. 1) as a religious spirit which operates between one Christian and another, especially when it denotes an attitude of considerate affection towards people who are faulty and trying. The least inappropriate English term is not mildness, much less meekness, which has acquired smug associations, but **gentleness** in the real meaning of the word, i.e. not a soft, amiable quality, but the tender, manly bearing of a strong leader in dealing with human beings whom he serves without being overbearing or subservient. Kipling's lines illustrate a large part of what Paul intends to convey by the word here:

> Even as he trod that day to God, so walked he from his birth,
> In simpleness and gentleness and honour and clean mirth.

Take your choice, Paul tells the Corinthians. 'Make up your minds which you will have; it all depends on your behaviour, how I have to treat you when I arrive, whether I can be gentle towards you or whether I have to discipline you.' The latter hint echoes the allusion to **God's Reign.** ' You have come into your kingdom, have you ? You are enjoying **God's Reign** without us ? But I, your apostle, am also inside God's Reign, and in it to do more than talk, as your new leaders and supervisors love to do.'

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD AND THE WORLD IN THE CHURCH

(v.–vi.)

' The man who divided up the epistles into chapters should have made this the beginning of the fifth chapter.' So Calvin comments on iv. 21. The division of chapters was certainly wrong at the eleventh chapter, but although it is abrupt here the abruptness is more of a difficulty in a thesis than in a letter, and ' **Am I to come ?** ' is more natural in the wake of ' **I will come** ' than as the start of a fresh period. However, a **rod of discipline** was already needed at Corinth. Even after his sharp letter on the need of drawing the line and dealing out excommunication against members who were guilty of flagrant sins, a horrid case had occurred. Paul was shocked to hear from some of Chloe's people or from the party of Stephanas that the church was tolerating a man guilty of notorious immorality. For some reason, possibly because he was too important or wealthy, nothing had been done to bring him to book. The apostle demands action (1–2), gives his own verdict (3–5) upon the case, and drives home the lesson (6–8). He is appalled to find any church of his so indifferent to morals. But there was a besetting temptation in the Mediterranean countries to consider religion apart from the good life. To be a holy man even then did not imply by any means that one was expected to be specially chaste or moral. The very religious cults did not stress this as essential, not even the Eleusinian mysteries, as they admitted an initiate. ' So far as we know, it was at no time enjoined that, in a moral sense, he should henceforth walk in newness of life. It cannot, indeed, be doubted that a ceremonial so impressive must often have produced a more or less enduring moral effect ; but the nature of the effect was left to the predisposition of the initiate ; it was not prescribed by the religion itself.'[1] But it was, by Christianity. Here, as already (iii. 16), Paul insists that the Faith involves moral purity, and he has to urge this, lest members of the Church should for any reason ignore the ethical implications of their religion. For various reasons those who had not been trained in the stricter ethic of Judaism were prone to take lightly the demands of faith on character. It is even conceivable that high-flying enthusiasts, like those of the Christ party, may have regarded this particular sexual indulgence as permissible for a free Christian (see on vi. 13 f.), or at any rate that they resented any appeal to an Old Testament or to a civil prohibition of such marriages as a legal infringement of Christian liberty. If so, it was not the only indication at Corinth of the moral and mental instability generated by emotional religion.

v.

1 **It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality such as is unknown even among pagans—that**
2 **a man has taken his father's wife ! And yet you are puffed up ! You ought much rather to be mourning the loss of a member ! Expel the perpetrator of such a crime.**

1 The word rendered **immorality** is used in the special sense of incest, i.e. illicit sexual intercourse between married or unmarried persons. Paul is following the prohibition of the Torah in Lev. xviii. 7, 8 (**you shall not have intercourse with your mother, your father's wife ; she is your mother, and you shall not have intercourse with her. You shall not have intercourse with any wife of your father ; she belongs to your father**). We need not take **unknown even among pagans** too literally, any more than the language of Cicero, who, in denouncing a Roman lady's passion for her son-in-law, declared that this

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[1] F. M. Cornford, *Cambridge Ancient History*, iv. 53

tie was ‘ an unbelievable crime, unheard of except for this case ’ (*Pro Cluentio*, v.–vi.). Greek and Roman history as well as romance refer to this offence against public morals; there were notorious pagan parallels to Reuben and Absalom, and even some contemporary scandals at Tarsus and elsewhere in the Hellenistic world. Such marriages, or illicit sexual connexions, were not only prohibited by Roman law, however, but reprobated by public opinion, although, if the man was a slave, his offence would not be heinous in the eyes of pagan society. Whether the man or the woman was primarily responsible at Corinth, we do not know. Paul singles out the man, either because by Oriental custom he was regarded as the chief offender or, perhaps, because the woman was not a Christian. It is not clear whether the father had died or had divorced her, nor even whether **taken** means marriage. But here was a man living openly with some former mistress of his father, or, more likely, a widow living with her step-son, who was a member of the local church. And the church had taken no action in the matter! They were so **puffed up** with self- 2
satisfaction over their spiritual privileges and attainments that they had complacently tolerated a scandal. Shame on you, their apostle cries! Instead of being proud of yourselves, **you ought much rather to be mourning the loss of a member.** Not that the offender had withdrawn from membership. On the contrary, neither he nor his fellow-Christians had seen anything gravely wrong about the offence. He was still tolerated among the saints. To Paul this was as shocking as the crime itself, however. ‘ **Expel** him, as I have in due form done already. Realize that this is a sin, and make him realize it also, for your own sake as well as for his.’

For my part, present with you in spirit though absent in body, 3
I have already, as in your presence, passed sentence on
such an offender as this, by authority of our Lord Jesus 4
Christ; I have met with you in spirit, and by the power of
our Lord Jesus I have consigned that individual to Satan 5
for the destruction of his flesh, in order that his spirit may
be saved on the Day of the Lord Jesus.

3 **For my part,** in contrast to your inaction, **I have passed sentence** on him. In Greek these three verses are one long complicated sentence, and the meaning is almost as obscure as the grammar. Apparently Paul is not summoning a
4 Church-meeting, but describing how he himself, **as in presence** of such a meeting, with them **in spirit,** had, as their responsible head and apostle, solemnly sentenced the offender. 'Surely I carried you with me?' He expects them to ratify this by expelling him from membership in the Church, which is the
5 visible sign of relegating the creature to the outside realm where bodily suffering, in some form of wasting sickness, paralysis, or even sudden death, was supposed to be the awful consequence of the ban. The supernatural conception of the Church revealed **Satan** ever on the watch to tempt and overthrow the faithful (2 Cor. xi. 3 f., ii. 11, etc.); if the evil One was still permitted (as in the case of Job) to inflict physical pains even on the good (2 Cor. xi. 7), how much more upon any disloyal souls who were ejected from the sacred fellowship. This is the same numinous world as that of the Old Testament prophets and of Acts (v. 1–11). The very 'holiness' which drew men into contact with the divine power also repelled unworthy elements in the community, either acting independently (iii. 17) or in response to the solemn power of the spoken curse. There are some indirect traces of this in the present epistle (e.g. in x. 10–11, xi. 30, and xvi. 22). It is in one sense the reverse of being servants or slaves of the Lord, who not only belong to him but enjoy his protection as they obey him; whereas to be guilty of wilful misconduct is to forfeit this relationship and lie exposed to the risk of mortal danger befalling soul and body. Greek piety was familiar with the custom of expecting a god, before whom some complaint was laid in his temple, to punish the applicant's enemy with some bodily ailment or misfortune by way of retribution, and rabbinic thought still considered that Satan might carry out a punitive judgement of God. Such ideas help to throw a sidelight on this strange conception of Church-discipline, vested in an apostle and his church, which operated **by the authority of the Lord Jesus,** i.e. by invoking his sacred 'name,' potent in

excommunication as well as in exorcism. It is not a vindictive punishment. Somehow Paul expects that this severity will prove the saving of the man's **spirit,** as though acute suffering might lead to a painful release from the grip of the sensual flesh. Such an experience, by inducing penitence, was the one hope for his personality in its worldly form, before the **Lord Jesus** returned on his **Day** of judgement. After all, was he not a baptized person ? He might be **saved** so as by fire.

How the case ended, we do not know, but there is an ominous hint in Paul's later fear that when he came back to Corinth he might have to mourn for **many who sinned some time ago and yet have never repented of their impurity, their sexual vice and sensual practices** (2 Cor. xii. 21). Apparently nothing was done by the church to bring this offender to book. Meantime the apostle is specially concerned with excommunication as a safeguard for the church itself. Such a sinner is a peril to them, which must at all costs be removed. The self-satisfied tone of their letter is **no credit** to them ; it is an ugly, unseemly sign of something putrefying in their condition (4-6).

Your boasting is no credit to you. Do you not know that a morsel 6
of dough will leaven the whole lump ? Clean out the old 7
dough that you may be a fresh lump. For you are free
from the old leaven ; *Christ our paschal lamb has been*
sacrificed. **So let us celebrate our festival, not with any** 8
old leaven, not with vice and evil, but with the unleavened
bread of innocence and integrity.

Never say by way of excuse that after all it's only one case. 6
Only one ? But it will infect **the whole** group (xv. 33). ' Souls to souls are like apples, one being rotten rots another,' said Thomas Traherne, in the seventeenth century. Paul, in the first, has another metaphor. The proverb about the **dough** (Gal. iii. 6), with its fermenting process which produced putrefaction, prompts him to stir them up to moral responsibility by taking an illustration from what was familiar to them as a ritual practice of local Jews at the passover season. By a rapid 7
asyndeton he represents the Church not merely as the **fresh**

lump, but as the strict household which cleans out **the old**
8 **leaven.** The exhortation becomes general, against any toleration of **vice and evil** on the part of the redeemed, who enjoy the freedom and fellowship of **the new covenant** (xi. 25) inaugurated by the sacrifice of Christ. Strictly speaking, it is true, the Greek word which is rendered ' passover ' (in this reminiscence of Exod. xii. 21) by most English versions, did not of itself suggest a **lamb** as distinct from a goat or kid ; what was vital was an animal victim. During the first century a goat might be selected, apparently. But more often it was a sheep, and in view of the Christian tradition, which regarded goats as typically inferior, it is fair to render the phrase by **our paschal lamb** or (as the Genevan version has it) ' our Easter lamb.' **You are free from the old leaven** expresses again the high consciousness of the Church being the real Israel or People of God (vii. 19, x. 1, 18). **The old leaven** is not Judaism or Judaistic influence ; it is any immoral practice inconsistent with their position as redeemed Christians. Paul's use of the allegory may have been prompted by the approach of the passover season (xvi. 8) ; it is not the only echo of the paschal rite, for the tale of x. 1 f. was a paschal theme, and xv. 20 may be another allusion. Nevertheless ' let us keep this feast ' does not refer to the Christian celebration of Easter as the equivalent for passover, nor to the eucharist ; it is **let us celebrate our festival** of faith and fellowship, since our whole life, thanks to the crucified Christ, is now a festival.

This is the one place where the apostle avails himself of the festival metaphor in order to express the idea of the Christian experience as joyous. The figure is implicit in the parables of Jesus (the most close illustration being in Matt. xxi. 1–10, 11–14), but here it is developed. (*a*) Christians are in the fellowship because they are called or invited ; this free, happy, intimate relationship to God is due to him, and (*b*) to his generosity in providing for his guests, above all due (*c*) to the sacrifice, once and for all offered, which alone makes the festival possible. The metaphor was familiar to Greeks, although it does not happen to occur in the Greek Bible. The Corinthians themselves in days gone by had once praised the

Athenians for their indefatigable temper, by declaring, 'they consider doing their duty to be their sole festival' or holiday (Thucydides, i. 70). Origen seems to have recalled this in his treatise against Celsus (viii. 21, 22), when he cites a Greek sage as defining the true festival: 'he keeps a true festival who does his duty and prays constantly, offering always bloodless sacrifices and prayers to God,' instead of participating, as Celsus thought a citizen should, in the official festivals. Though we Christians do hold social festivals of our own like Pentecost, Origen retorts, our entire life is keeping a festival. It was further a well-known Stoic idea that, while bad men lack the festive spirit, the honest man lives life as a festival in fulfilling his religious and moral duties. Philo had taken over the term and the idea; repeatedly he argues that for the high-minded, self-controlled person all life is a happy festival or a cheerful experience. It is in this figurative sense that Paul uses **let us celebrate** or keep **our festival**, as Chrysostom noted: 'all time is a festival since the Son of God redeemed you from death.' Both the Jewish associations of 'passover' and the Hellenistic associations of 'festival' enter into the Christian phrase for a life delivered from haunting care and fear. Thanks to the redemptive power of the Cross, Christians have a festival of the soul in which the divine sacrifice produces a consciousness of confident communion, the one condition of enjoying it being a moral sensitiveness to the obligations of the Host. The Lord is responsible for the feast of fellowship; we are responsible for the sound life which alone is worthy to receive what he bestows on his freed people, day after day.

The closing words 'with sincerity and truth' are a phrase for moral and spiritual soundness. 'Sincerity' is **innocence** in a wider sense than in the individual references of 2 Cor. i. 12, ii. 17, where it denotes personal character devoid of private ends, with no unconquered selfishness or conceit. Here it is the stainless life of a community, straightforward and consistent, unsullied by any worldly compromise, and this could be called **integrity,** since 'truth' or goodness (xiii. 6), as the one real life answering to God's true law, is the opposite of vice and evil (Rom. i. 29). Only the clean life can enjoy the festival.

After this general admonition he returns to the immediate question of the local scandal (9–13). ‘Do not misunderstand me, as you misunderstood my previous letter, under the impression that I am advocating an impracticable puritanism; all I insist upon is that you discipline this or any other notorious offender.’

9 **In my letter I wrote that you were not to associate with the**
10 **immoral. I did not mean you were literally to avoid contact with the immoral in this world, with the lustful and the thievish, or with idolaters; in that case you would have**
11 **to leave the world altogether. What I now write is that you are not to associate with any so-called brother who is immoral or lustful or idolatrous or given to abuse or drink or robbery. Associate with him? Do not even eat with**
12 **him. Outsiders it is no business of mine to judge. No, you must judge those who are inside the church, for yourselves;**
13 **as for outsiders, God will judge them.** ***Expel the wicked from your company.***

9 It is not difficult to see how they could not avoid mixing, in business and social life, with people of loose morals. Some were married to pagan partners (vii. 13 f.), others were slaves in households (vii. 21 f.) where they must often have had to minister to the very vices of their masters and mistresses (as the obscene drawings at Pompeii show with startling frankness). According to Alciphron, a second-century sophist, Corinth was still notorious for ‘the loathsome life of the
11 wealthy and the wretched misery of the poor.’ It is more difficult to imagine how even in a lax church Christians could be tolerated who were guilty of such vices as the apostle mentions here. He is not stringing together a list of moral misdeeds from current catalogues of misbehaviour, but branding definite offences, such as sexual immorality, a flagrant case of which was the issue in question, and lustfulness. The Greek term for **lustful** (as in Eph. v. 5) means more than ‘covetous’ or grasping; it is a taste for gross sensuality. In the wake of sexual indulgence the Hellenistic Jews ranked

idolatry, following the tradition of the Hebrew past (see x. 7–14). This seems to be the first time that 'idolater' occurs in literature. Paul apparently regards those Christians as idolaters who claimed the right of participating in the pagan cult-meals (x. 14–21); whatever they might plead to the contrary, he insisted that this conduct was the practical recognition of other gods. Perhaps, also, some Corinthians kept pagan statues in their homes still. Thieves and tipsy creatures are more obviously unchristian than the foul-tongued who are **given to abuse,** but in this remarkable ethical judgement the apostle had in mind, as one source of the vice, the local claim to freedom, as if that entitled anyone to speak freely or bluntly about real or supposed defects of character in others. It included not only abuse, but backbiting. When Theophrastus is describing the temper of detraction or evil-speaking in Greek towns (*Characters*, xxviii.) he tells how such a fellow 'will not shrink from abusing even his relatives, and will speak evil especially of his friends and kinsfolk, yea of the very dead, calling such speech "frank," "democratic," and "independent."' It is the only place in his letters where Paul singles out the vice of coarse, reckless abuse, and he comes back to it in vi. 10. He knew what it was to be reviled with sneers and bitter charges by outsiders (iv. 12). That had to be borne. But it was another thing when **so-called** Christians indulged in hot-tongued **abuse,** denouncing those who happened to differ from them or railing at fellow-members of the Church for their errors. He stamps this vice as fatal to the vital spirit of love within the community. Some Christians later took objection to Paul's severity in ranking abuse and drinking on the same level as immorality and idolatry; but, as Chrysostom (on vi. 10) points out, the apostle is true to the ethic of Jesus here, for 'Christ himself doomed the man who called his brother Fool. And often that sin has brought forth death.' Jesus had taught that there were more ways of murdering a man than by killing him, and abusive rancour was one of them. Paul viewed it in the same light, however it might be disguised as an expression of moral indignation against wrong views or inconsistent conduct. It is curious that a similar case once occurred at Corinth in philosophical circles, according to Philostratus, who declares that his hero Apollonius had to deal with a certain Bassus of Corinth: 'he made a false claim to wisdom, and no bridle was on his tongue, but Apollonius put a stop to his abusiveness' (*Life of Apollonius*, iv. 26). It is one indication of the stress laid by Paul on good feeling and harmony that he takes so serious a view of this ugly habit.

11 With such offenders one must **not even eat,** in public or in
private. As the author of the Syriac *Sayings of Ahikar*
(ii. 16) declared, 'My son, it is not becoming even to eat with
13 a shameless man.' No social intercourse with them. **Expel the
wicked from your company** echoes the death-sentences of the
Greek Bible (Deut. xiii. 5 f., etc.) upon those excommunicated
from Israel. It is a summons not only to avoid (as in 2 Thess.
iii. 14 f.), but to eject a cool, deliberate offender like this inces-
12 tuous creature. 'As for outside scoundrels, leave them to
God. My exposure of them is a warning for yourselves, and
no more.' Paul does not intend to preach on the sins of
society at Corinth; he tells the church sharply that they
have enough to do with keeping their own little fellowship
pure, instead of indulging in cheap, sweeping denunciations of
local pagans who belong to a social order which is soon to
collapse.

In a tract on the *Posterity of Cain*, Philo maintained that the most serious quarrels in the world arose from selfish craving either for handsome women or for money. The second of these now comes up, but the real nexus between v. and vi. 1–11 is the idea of 'judging.' Judge **outsiders?** No! Then why let outsiders judge you? If it is no business of yours to sit in judgement upon pagans, it is none of their business to have your petty disputes over property brought before their courts. Paul is still arguing in terms of his Jewish and ethnic tradition. As he had taken over **outsiders,** the Jewish term for gentiles, so here he insists that Christians, as God's People, should practise of their own accord what Jews were allowed to do by permission of the Roman State. At Corinth (Acts xviii. 15) probably, as at Alexandria and

Sardis certainly, the ghetto had the privilege of holding courts of their own to deal with breaches of the Torah. Besides, the practice of the Beth-din in Judaism was paralleled not merely by the *eranoi*, or benefit clubs, at Athens and elsewhere in Greece (Plato's *Laws*, 915), which discouraged law-suits between members and advised arbitration, but by Roman social fellowships called *sodalitates*, whose members were bound to settle disputes privately instead of in the civil courts. As the inscriptions show, a *sodalitas* was a religious brotherhood which practised certain rites, including sacrifice to some deity, and further forbade any member of the association to hale another before criminal courts of law ; indeed, so deeply was the religious bond felt, that no member would even act as a judge in cases where a fellow-member was involved. Internal disputes between members of similar *sunodoi*, or semi-religious societies, in Egypt, were also settled between the parties concerned, who were not allowed to drag one another before ordinary courts of justice (*Harvard Theological Review*, 1936, pp. 53 f.). What the apostle is contending for was therefore not unfamiliar to Corinthians with ethnic associations. He desires some informal board of arbitration for the Church, as a practical expression of their real, unworldly fellowship.

vi.

When any of you has a grievance against his neighbour, do you 1
dare to go to law in a sinful pagan court, instead of laying
the case before the saints ? Do you not know that the 2
saints are to manage the world ? If the world is to come
under your jurisdiction, are you incompetent to adjudicate
upon trifles ? Do you not know that we are to manage 3
angels, let alone mundane issues ? And yet, when you have 4
mundane issues to settle, you refer them to the judgment of
men who from the point of view of the church are of no
account ! I say this to put you to shame. Has it come to 5
this, that there is not a single wise man among you who
could decide a dispute between members of the brotherhood
instead of one brother going to law with another—and 6
before unbelievers too ! Even to have law-suits with one 7

another at all, is in itself evidence of defeat. Why not rather let yourselves be wronged? Why not rather let
8 **yourselves be defrauded? But instead of that you inflict wrong and practise frauds—and that on members of the brotherhood!**

1 If 'matter' or **grievance** here denoted a special vice like that of illicit connexion (a man taking a woman to whom he had no right), this would yield a close nexus between v. and vi. But the term has its technical sense of 'case.' Paul is now handling questions of 'mine' and 'thine' generally (7, 8). He does not say how he had heard of the Corinthian litigiousness. Nor does he suggest that Christians were unlikely to get justice in a pagan court. Though for once he does call pagans **sinful,** the derogatory adjective is no more than an equivalent either for **unbelievers** (6), much as a strict Jew might speak of gentile sinners (Gal. ii. 15), or for **men of no account** (4), judged from the Christian standpoint. How absurd and illogical for Church
2 people to go before their bar, when they are soon to come before **the saints** as divine rulers of the world! Such is the plea of 1–4, based on the apocalyptic belief that in the coming
3 messianic age (xv. 25) the saints were to share God's rule over **the world,** even over fallen **angels** or the angel-guardians of pagan nations. This expectation, a naïve expression of faith in the final triumph of good over evil, was echoed outside Christianity by the later Neoplatonists; the Emperor Julian's friend and philosopher, Sallustius, closed his treatise on *The Gods and the World* (xxi.) by predicting that after death 'the souls of the good are in union with the gods and join them in governing the whole world.' Paul assumes this outlook as
4 part and parcel of the Christian hope. If so, how far beneath the dignity of Christians to go into some pagan court at present over mundane issues, mere financial **trifles** connected with making a livelihood in this age! His lofty tone recalls the contempt of Plato in the third book of the *Republic* for anyone who was so litigious as to frequent law-courts over matters like money and property, issues far too trifling to deserve the notice and interest of a free, good man. But the apostle's

argument is religious. **Shame** on you! This proves that you 5
have not a truly high Church-consciousness. Why not arbitrate among yourselves? You who plume yourselves on your 'wisdom' (he adds sarcastically), surely you could find some one of your own number **wise** enough to settle such miserable unimportant details! Then he deepens his remonstrance;
apart from all that, the very fact of Christians prosecuting one 7
another in **lawsuits** (Exod. xviii. 22) means what moralists call an ethical **defeat**, a break-down of principle. It is a telling word. 'You have really lost your case before you enter a
pagan court, you have lost the Christian case, which is to 8
suffer injuries rather than to **inflict** them.' He assumes that the litigiousness is due to a spirit of grasping fraud, which is out of keeping with the gospel. The **you** is emphatic. 'Instead of bearing wrong, as the Lord taught, you inflict wrong, **and that on** fellow-Christians.' This ethical appeal was familiar to the best pagan moralism of Greece and Rome, from Plato to Musonius Rufus and Seneca, though it is curious that at the war congress of 431 B.C. in Sparta it was the Corinthian delegates who declared that 'brave men abandon peace for war when they are injured; they are not disposed to brook injuries for the sake of enjoying the ease of peace' (Thucydides, i. 120). More or less informal efforts have been made in the Church to carry out the apostle's counsel. One of the earliest was in the Syrian Churches of the third century, where the bishop and his clergy held a weekly meeting to decide any business disputes between members of the Church, who were warned against prosecuting any Christian in pagan courts of justice. So we learn from a manual of Church order called *The Didascalia Apostolorum.*

He now improves the occasion by warning them, suddenly and sharply, of a number of vices, besides self-seeking and litigiousness, which defeat and disqualify Christians (9–11). This paragraph, which introduces what follows, is directed against any tendency to laxity over morals in spiritual people who might be tempted to console themselves with the thought of God's forgiving kindness; but he is specially thinking of a Corinthian abuse of freedom, which inclined high-flying saints to regard sins of the flesh as of minor importance or even as permissible and legitimate (12–20). It is a stern recall to the moral obligations of the Christian position. ‘ You tell me that you have **come into your kingdom** (iv. 8) ; you are already enjoying the Realm of God ? Remember, there are some things that exclude from **the Realm** altogether.’ For the third time in this one chapter—and there are three more cases —he asks, **Do you not know ?**

9 **What ! do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the Realm of God ? Make no mistake about it ; neither the**
10 **immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor catamites nor sodomites nor thieves nor the lustful nor the drunken nor**
11 **the abusive nor robbers will inherit the Realm of God. Some of you were once like that ; but you washed yourselves clean, you were consecrated, you were justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.**

9 Some of the vices in this grim list had been already noted (v. 9–11), but Paul includes, as he does in Romans (i. 24 f.), unnatural vice. The **catamites**, or ‘ effeminate ’ (as the Latins called them, *molles*), were those who yielded to the active passion of the **sodomites** in homosexual love, which, as we know from Paul's contemporary Petronius, was not seriously or generally regarded as heinous ; occasionally it was reprobated and punished, but Christianity first, and from the first, became its uncompromising foe, in line with the best Hebrew and Jewish traditions of morality. We overhear in these words the preaching of the apostle to pagans (Acts xxiv. 25),
11 with a stringent demand for repentance and clean living, which came into force when at baptism penitents were **consecrated** to the service and possession of **the Lord** (i. 2) and **justified** or ‘ put right ’ with him, making a clean break with the world—‘ clean ’ in more senses than one. It is another frank and serious reminiscence of the Corinthian mission (i. 26 f.). ‘ Such were some of you, but ’ something happened to you, something that should mean everything to you still.

In one of his rounded periods the orator Dio Chrysostom described Corinth as the most wanton of cities, past or present. This was not long after Paul, and it is significant that the apostle was at Corinth when he wrote two of his most scathing descriptions of pagan immorality (1 Thess. iv. 3 f., Rom. i. 18 f.). To 'corinthianize' had become an equivalent in Greek for practising fornication. Probably the moral level was no higher than that of other great sea-ports in the so-called Christian world of to-day, but one serious menace to morals lay in the absence of any definite public opinion against immorality, especially in the case of men, before and even after marriage. Sexual vice was laughed at on the stage, and practically condoned by many ethical leaders, like Epictetus ('Shun sex-indulgence with all your might before marriage; if you do gratify your passions, let it be done lawfully. But never show harshness or censure those who so indulge,' *Enchiridion*, xxxiii.), Cicero, Seneca, and Plutarch himself (*Advice on Marriage*, xvi.—a wife not to be angry with her husband for some intrigue with a harlot or a maidservant; she should reflect that he is indulging his wantonness and gratifying his passion with another woman, out of respect for herself). It is against this attitude that Paul writes the next passage (12–20). Logically it might be taken with 2 Cor. vi. 14–vii. 1 as part of the original first letter. But its present position is not out of keeping with the context; Paul knew that these lax tendencies at Corinth, as well as elsewhere (see Phil. iii. 19), required to be dealt with more than once, particularly as they were being justified by some spiritual antinomians in the name of 'wisdom.'

'All things are lawful for me'? 12
Yes, but not all are good for me.
'All things are lawful for me'?
Yes, but I am not going to let anything master me.
'Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for 13
food'?
Yes, and God will do away with the one and the other.
The body is not meant for immorality but for the Lord, and
the Lord is for the body; and the God who raised the Lord 14

15 will also raise us by his power. Do you not know that your
bodies are members of Christ? Am I to take Christ's
16 members and devote them to a harlot? Never! Do you
not know that
he who joins himself to a harlot
is one with her in body
(for *the pair,* it is said, *shall become one flesh*),
17 while he who joins himself to the Lord
is one with him in spirit.
18 Shun immorality! Any other sin that a man commits is
outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his
19 body. Do you not know that your body is the temple of the
holy Spirit within you—the Spirit you have received from
20 God? You are not your own, you were bought for a price;
then glorify God with your body.

12 **Good** is 'expedient' in the higher sense of the term, beneficial or serviceable to oneself. In x. 23, where the phrase is again cited, it refers to influence or example, but here it is opposed to what is bad for oneself, not to what is bad for others. There is a play on words in **lawful** (*exesti*) and **master** (*exousiazei*) which it is difficult to express in English, but the idea is obvious. Dr. Gunion Rutherford renders the clause: 'In all things I may do as I please, but I will not be so false to myself as to let things do as they please with me.'

13 **Food** is mentioned, not in connexion with the problem to be raised later (x. 23 f.), but because it was bound up with a specious plea for sexual laxity. Christians are indeed free from the distinctions between ritually clean and unclean food, as Jesus had taught, and Paul does no more than remind the Corinthians in passing that this bodily function will soon be a thing of the past; it is not a permanent part of personality. The real point is that some regarded it and another bodily function as equally permissible, and justified their self-expression not only by appealing to his own teaching of freedom, but by arguing, on the lines of contemporary public opinion, that the sexual appetite was to be gratified and satisfied as naturally as any other. If Paul taught that the spiritual

Christian is free, why limit that to the sphere of food? They had behind them a tradition dear to local pride. Had not Diogenes, the philosophical hero of Corinth, not merely taught this, but practised it frankly? There were indeed voices being raised in protest, by none more sturdily than Musonius Rufus at Rome, the Stoic teacher of Epictetus. Yet at Corinth (see 2 Cor. xii. 19) some members of the Church had not broken quite away from this inherited ethic. There was a special form of it already, as there was soon afterwards in other quarters (see 'General Epistles,' pp. 216 f., in our Commentary) in the teaching of spiritual libertines, who calmly maintained that such bodily enjoyments had no effect upon a redeemed spirit, which could not be affected by anything on the merely physical level. If the Stoic was a free man, in this respect, they pled, how much more the man possessed by the Spirit of God?

In his trenchant denial that the two appetites are on the same footing, Paul's reply is purely religious. **Immorality,** as he bluntly calls sex-indulgence on a promiscuous scale, is not denounced as a menace to public health, nor on account of its psychological unfairness to the woman or to the man, but as a violation of the sacred tie between the Christian and the Lord, as a sin of the self living in **the body,** a sin that strikes at the roots of the personality which is to flower into a risen life.
The force of the argument turns on the fact that he is using 14
body in much the same double sense as we do when we speak of 'somebody' or 'everybody.' **Body** meant not only the physical frame in which the personality expressed itself, but the personality. The wider sense is dominant in the opening sentence, e.g. about **the Lord** being **for the body** of Christians; plainly it is here not **body** as opposed to spirit, but body as including spirit, though there is an implicit allusion to the
resurrection. The specific sense of **body** might seem to be domi- 15
nant in the next claim that harlotry or immorality is absolutely inconsistent with the Christian's tie to Christ; but Paul is still claiming that a lustful man gives over his will no less than his body to the **harlot,** which is a breach of the tie between his personality and Christ. The **body** is not an

indifferent organ but the vital expression of the self, even in the case of what may be held to be a casual, transient pleasure.
16 So strongly does Paul feel on this point that he actually applies to illicit passion or cohabitation what was originally used of married love. This sounds sufficiently daring, but it is more than mere personal aversion to any sex-connexion (vii. 1, 7); probably he would consider, like many rabbis of the day, that such intercourse did constitute a sort of marriage. Indeed these ultra-ascetics ventured to enjoy connexion with a loose woman as an equivalent for the marriage which they loftily renounced; they would rather 'burn than marry' (vii. 9)! Equally strong is his assertion that immorality is the
17 one **sin against** the **body,** for anyone who has adhered or
18 **joined himself to the Lord.** This is based upon the same principle; the offence is judged so personal, such a real union with the woman, that it involves a breach with the spiritual union, in a radical sense, which does not apply to any other
19 bodily sin such as drunkenness or theft or lying. As the Christian's **body** is the **temple of** God's **Spirit,** which has been bestowed and received at baptism (vi. 11), immorality becomes an act of sacrilege for the individual, as other sins are for the sacred community (iii. 16). Nothing so outrages God and alienates the Christian as a loose behaviour which assumes that he has the right to do as he pleases with what he has already allowed God to possess. This is the thought of the words,
20 **you are not your own** but **bought for a price** (as in vii. 23), i.e. emancipated from any such slavery to low habits of the past and taken over by your new Owner. 'A Christian slave of Corinth going up the path to Acro-Corinthus would see towards the north-west the snowy peak of Parnassus rising clearer and clearer before him, and everyone knew that within the circuit of that commanding summit lay the shrines at which Apollo or Serapis or Æsculapius the Healer bought slaves with a price, for freedom. Then in the evening assembly was read the letter lately received from Ephesus,'[1] when all present, slaves or free, were reminded of the Lord who had emancipated them, at the price of his own life, from sin and

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[1] Deissmann's *Light from the Ancient East*, p. 329.

death, and reminded also to **glorify God** with their bodies instead of desecrating his shrine by physical lust.

This searching counsel illustrates Paul's habit of letting a word start several thoughts and prompt more than one appeal, particularly a pregnant term like **body**. His language, suggesting **members** as a metaphor for 'belonging to,' is partly 15 drawn from the Stoic vocabulary, familiar to all Corinthians, but in his own Greek Bible the verb rendered **joins** happens to 16 be employed in exactly these two senses, of connexion **with a harlot** and also with the Lord. Except for x. 14, this is the 18 only passage where he uses the trenchant **shun** or 'flee from.' Posidonius, the great missioner of Stoicism at Rome, had urged that 'what we need to do is not so much to shun wickedness as to follow after those who will purge us and prevent badness from increasing within us.' Paul touches this truth elsewhere, but his immediate aim is to contrast true religion with immorality. The emphasis falls on **shun**, marking the shuddering recoil from sensuality which flashes up in the imperative, 'Come now, **glorify God with your body**,' instead 20 of dishonouring him to whom you now belong. For the mention of **price** here is not so much a reminder of what redemption cost as of the fact that the emancipated or redeemed had passed into possession of a new Owner. In Paul's religious mind there is a vein of more than normal asceticism, as we shall presently see, but he had no sympathy with any asceticism which regarded the body as an absolute hindrance to the experience of God, though this view was being eagerly propounded by the local mystics of Orphic spiritualism at Corinth.

There are more references to 'body' in First Corinthians than in all the other epistles put together. Some are partly literal, some are partly or wholly metaphorical; but even when as here they seem to be literal, they sometimes imply something more or something other than a modern reader realizes. The precise meaning of the apostle in every case depends upon inherited conceptions of psychology which he took over and reshaped from Hebrew and Greek religious thought. This is the first of the four expositions of 'the body' in the epistle, and its significance is determined by a background of thought which is not exactly akin to ours. On an issue like that of immorality (vi. 12–20), the physical notion of the body is naturally emphasized. But for one trained in Hebrew thought there was no sharp distinction between what we term soul and body. 'The soul is more than the body, but the body is a perfectly valid manifestation of the soul; indeed the body is the soul in its outward form.'[1] Life or the spirit acts through the members of the body, which is thus an outward expression of man's vital energy in the present world. At its highest, life is in the soul and at its lowest in the body, but both are conceived as embodiments of the divine spirit in man. It might almost be said that from this point of view body is neutral between spirit and flesh. It may become a 'body of flesh,' material in a moral as well as in a physical sense; it may also be controlled by the Spirit of God. Thus **body** comes to be an equivalent for what we call personality, as, e.g., in 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11 and in the present passage. When Paul says that he was **absent** from the Corinthians **in body** but **present in spirit** (v. 3), he means that he was absent, as we say, in person. Even when he declares that promiscuous intercourse with a harlot makes a man **one with her in body** while intercourse with the Lord means union **with him in spirit,** he implies that the former is an action or relation of the human self, just as union with the Lord in spirit is more than an inner tie; the latter involves the body as the organ or seat of the spirit, since the true Christian is bound to **glorify God** by devoting to him alone the **body** or form of being which he has assigned to this mortal life. The comment upon body in connexion with promiscuous intercourse—**for the pair become one flesh**—corresponds to the correlation of **flesh** and **body** in 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11; cohabitation, instead of being a purely physical or transient tie, is held to produce a united life in which the two are so closely knit together that they form a single self, as it were. Like a genuine Hebrew, Paul repudiated any notion of the soul being either imprisoned in the body or being able to live its own life irrespective of the body, whether that life was degrading or noble. At Corinth he found that this notion was being used to justify sexual indulgence, as if that were an *adiaphoron*, an irrelevant, indifferent accident which did not really affect the pure soul. Hence his stress on **body** as at once the whole self and also the physical side of the self or personality. Hence also, at a later stage, his stress on the need for a body in the risen life after death. In xv. 35 f., arguing against a semi-materialistic view of the risen body, such as most contemporary Jews held, as well as against a purely 'spiritual' or disembodied conception of immortality, such as Greeks held, he upholds the idea of a changed body, meaning, still, by **body** what we may call the organic individuality or entire personality; Paul believes that, even when removed from the mortal flesh of the present order, the spirit requires a form of existence corresponding to its final self. Consequently he coins the paradoxical phrase 'spiritual body,' though its underlying meaning is no more than that which is put more simply elsewhere, as, e.g., in, **He who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies live by his indwelling Spirit in your lives**; or in, **The Lord Jesus Christ will transform the body that belongs to our low estate till it resembles the body of his Glory.** But the present passage already reflects this idea of the Christian personality being vitally bound up with **body**, even in its physical form of the organism which belongs to the immediate order of being.

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[1] J. Pedersen, *Israel*, pp. 170 f.

IS MARRIAGE PERMISSIBLE FOR A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH? AND IF SO, HOW FAR?

(vii.)

Paul now turns to the first of the questions in the church's communication. Under the influence of the ultra-ascetical party, some wondered whether any true Christian should compromise the spiritual life by marrying at all; they asked whether, in the case of two Christians being married already, it would not be advisable to give up sexual intercourse altogether. This is the first aspect of the problem to be discussed (1–7, 8–9). Since Paul was himself unmarried, some of his own supporters expected him to approve of the idea that marital relations ought to be discouraged and repressed. Naturally this would not occur to those who followed a married apostle like Peter. But, while marriage was regarded as normal for men—early marriage, indeed, being favoured—there were cases even of rabbis remaining bachelors. Paul was one of them. Unlike Augustine, Luther, and Knox, he was one of the great religious leaders in whom warmth of heart and passionate interest in their fellow-creatures are not accompanied by any sex-interest. He appears, indeed, to have felt a certain dislike for the sex-relation. With a touch of wistful impatience he wishes everybody was like himself in this. But, as he was not an ascetic dualist, so, like a sound moralist, he refused to identify chastity with celibacy, whatever the super-spiritualists might think, and he soon realized that the strictly ascetic rule might become as irrational in its own way as the licence against which it reacted. His teaching on this is often misrepresented by the very Church fathers, like Tertullian and Jerome, who appealed to it as their authority.

The ascetic current which was flowing strongly in some quarters of contemporary philosophy and religion, as an effort to break away from the coarse, subtle tyranny of lust and luxury, did not turn at Corinth into the channels of antipathy to property or to animal food. It was felt most strongly on the question of marriage. In Hellenism of the period, upon its religious side, there was an enlightenment or knowledge of God which meant a mystical absorption in him, often sought through ecstasy and involving ascetic discipline, i.e. the severance of the spirit as far as possible from trammels of the flesh. Traces of this are to be noted in the Corinthian zealots. Their asceticism was the negative side of a positive devotion to the Lord. It was due to their ardent craving for Christ, perhaps, as a mystical ‘ Wisdom ’ or supernatural Power. On one side, this stimulated the craving for an ecstatic phase like *glossolalia* ; on another it prompted the conscious renunciation of all sex-connexion as unworthy of the soaring spirit.

Such was the situation with which the apostle was now required to deal at Corinth.

vii.
Now for the questions in your letter. 1
It is indeed 'an excellent thing for a man to have no inter-
course with a woman'; but there is so much immorality 2
that every man had better have a wife of his own and every
woman a husband of her own.
The husband must give the wife her conjugal dues, 3
and the wife in the same way must give her husband
his;
a wife cannot do as she pleases with her body—her 4
husband has power,
and in the same way a husband cannot do as he pleases
with his body—his wife has power.
Do not withhold sexual intercourse from one another, 5
unless you agree to do so for a time in order to devote
yourselves to prayer. Then come together again. You
must not let Satan tempt you through incontinence. (But 6
what I have just said is by way of concession, not command.
I would like all men to be as I am. However, everyone is 7
endowed by God in his own way; he has a gift for the
one life or the other.)
To the unmarried and to widows I would say this: it is an 8
excellent thing if like me they remain as they are. Still, if 9
they cannot restrain themselves, let them marry. Better
marry than be aflame with passion!

Laws had been recently passed under Augustus to dis-
courage celibacy and encourage marriage, in view of the falling
birth-rate and in order to check profligacy. In his present con-
viction that the End was imminent, Paul had no interest in
any continuance of the race. But he was so alarmed by what 1
had been happening at Corinth (vi. 12 f.) that, much as he
sympathized with the principle of celibacy, he could not agree 2
with the ultra-ascetics in a thoroughgoing disparagement of
marriage; reluctantly but firmly he views marriage, i.e.
monogamy, as a lesser risk upon the whole than any

3 overstrained attempt to practise the celibate life. And it must be real marriage, with due provision for the sexual impulse; this is the point of the counsel in 3–5. Cohabitation is a mutual
5 duty, only to be suspended by common agreement **for a time,** if both parties desired to take part in some special religious service of devotion. In some of the mystery-cults sexual relations were temporarily suspended by devotees during a period of religious ritual, and the same habit was inculcated in Judaism, on the day of atonement, for example (Joma viii. 1), or on the sabbath (according to the Book of Jubilees 1. 8). According to the Testament of Napthali (viii. 8), 'there is a time for embracing a wife and a time for abstaining, for a man's prayer,' but Paul assumes that both wife and husband pray (as in 1 Peter iii. 7). He speaks frankly on this matter. So far from being prudish or fanatical, he is alive to what the physical basis here means. Any prolonged abstinence might lead to one or other of the pair seeking gratification outside marriage—**incontinence** being one of the temptations (see 2 Cor. ii. 1) with which **Satan** beset the Church. The wise ethic of pharisaism had forbidden prolonged abstention from sexual duties on the part of married people, and, for all his ascetic instincts, Paul was not blind to the danger of a husband or a wife overstraining human nature by defrauding the other party of **conjugal dues,** even for the sake of spiritual ends.

He now returns for a moment to his original statement about marriage being permissible and indeed advisable in the cir-
6 cumstances. '**What I have just said** (in verse 2) is not a law laid down for everyone.' Personally he would prefer **all to be** able and willing, **like himself,** to stand outside marriage, but, like Jesus (Matthew xix. 12), he recognizes that celibacy or
7 continence is **a gift of God**; one must be born with an endowment for the single life as for marriage. It is not for an apostle to say, 'You must marry'; all he can say is, 'You may marry,' even while he feels entitled to add, 'You had better not, unless you have to.' No doubt, his advice had been asked, and an apostle's advice or opinion carried weight. **By way of concession,** i.e. in view of the strong temptations to incontinence in human nature and in the existing social order, he

admitted marriage to be legitimate for Christians who could not otherwise resist the seductions to illicit intercourse which were so insidious at Corinth. On the other hand he honestly recognizes in marriage a divine order for life. Whether or not an individual should marry, is left to his own judgement, in the light of how he or she has been **endowed by God.** Not only as a man trained in Judaism, but as a disciple of Christ, he knew from experience a subtle and widespread menace to religion in the sexual laxity of the age, even within some of the mystery-cults, where obscene practices were bound up with so-called 'devotion.' To escape such impurity, to prevent religion from spoiling morality, he considered that celibacy was the safest line of life, but he never regarded the sexual impulse as essentially sinful. It is passionate sins of the flesh which he condemns. The naturalism of his day, as of our own, assumed that men and women required some sexual experience in order to live a full life. Paul's plea for celibacy carries with it at any rate the valuable principle that in certain cases even marriage is not essential to the complete development of human nature. And his practical wisdom shines out in the fact that, as he declines to admit that a normal healthy life needs some sexual experience, he insists that if Christians do marry, as they are well entitled to do, there must be no morbid evasion or restriction of the sexual impulse. On the latter point he wrote for many in vain. Some of the later apocryphal Acts depict Christianity as a religion whose apostles went about the world doing little else than inducing husbands and wives to abstain from all intercourse.

Before speaking about married people in connexion with
separation or divorce (10–16), and of unmarried people who
have had no sexual experience as yet (25 f.), Paul, in rabbinic
fashion, mentions those who are at present **unmarried,** i.e. as
divorced or separated or widowed. Whatever they do, let 8
them beware of over-strained asceticism. Should such men
and women feel an almost irresistible return of sexual desire,
this defective self-control (ix. 25) is to be taken as a sign that 9
the high honour of celibacy is not for them. **Better marry**
again, if they are not fit for what is really better! Paul speaks

with a touch of scorn. To ' burn ' or to **be aflame with** sexual **passion** is not a reference to hell-fire, as some of the Latin fathers imagined, from Tertullian onwards, but to the **incontinence** of which he had just been speaking in another connexion (verse 5). Why he mentions **widows** as a special class is not quite clear. But in the primitive churches they were a particular problem, and in some respects an exacting charge, as may be seen in 1 Tim. v. 3–16. He returns to their case later (39, 40). Meantime, his reference to them is best illustrated by what Jeremy Taylor says to widows (' the fontinel of whose desires hath been opened by the former permissions of marriage ') in the third chapter of his *Holy Living*.

Now for a word on separation or divorce, in the case of marriages where both husband and wife are members of the Church (10, 11).

10 **For married people these are my instructions (and they are the Lord's, not mine). A wife is not to separate from her**
11 **husband—if she has separated, she must either remain single or be reconciled to him—and a husband must not put away his wife.**

10 The prohibition of divorce is **the Lord's,** not an opinion of his own, though **my instructions** has the categorical verb (' I command ') as in verse xi. 17 and in the Thessalonian letters. The saying of Jesus (preserved in Mark x. 11–12, etc.) is recalled to the memory of the Corinthians, and stamped as a ruling for life. As the feminist party in the local church had evidently claimed freedom to desert or divorce a husband, Paul mentions the case of **a wife** first. Some wives, of an ultra-spiritual temper, may have gone or wished to go further than to suspend marital relations (verses 3–4). Others would be swayed by social precedents, apart from religious grounds. Although in Jewish law a wife had not exactly the same power as Greek and Roman women had, in certain circumstances, to press for divorce, she might induce the courts to consider a plea for divorce on such grounds as ' impotence, denial of conjugal rights, unreasonable restriction of her freedom

of movement, such as keeping her from going to funerals or wedding-parties, loathsome ailments, or nasty occupations such as tanning.'[1] By rabbinical law, a Jewish husband might put away his wife for adultery or barrenness (after ten years), or, according to the lax ruling of Hillel, for much less serious offences. The stricter school of the Shammaites insisted that unfaithfulness was the sole reason for divorce, but they evaded the hardship of this ruling by permitting polygamy, which in contemporary pharisaism was regarded as outworn and exceptional rather than as illegal. Since Paul seems to be contemplating the case of serious-minded enthusiasts who had separated for ascetic reasons, he does not need to reckon with the possibility even of adultery as a valid reason for divorce (supposing that **except for unchastity**[2] lay in his text of the saying preserved in Matt. v. 32). He warns an ex-wife that permission to re-marry is excluded by her original action. If 11 in cooler and saner moments she thinks better of marriage, after the divorce, she must continue unmarried (supposing that her husband is out of reach, for example) or be re-united to him. **Reconciled** may even imply that the separation started from some pique on her part, mixed up with a question of alleged principle. 'Separations took place,' says Chrysostom, 'not only on account of incontinence and other pretexts, but because of infirmities of temper,' or, as our modern equivalent has it, on account of incompatibility of temperament.

But what if one became a Christian when his wife or her husband remained a Jew or pagan? This was a practical question which the Lord Jesus had never had occasion to meet in Palestine, but it emerged in a city like Corinth. The difficulties and even the dangers of such a position, particularly for the wife, became extremely serious in the course of the next two centuries. They lie in a mild form under the situation of 1 Pet. iii. 1–7. Here, in verses 12–16, we have the first discussion of a problem which had apparently been laid before Paul by some puzzled Corinthians in their communication. That Christians should not enter into a mixed marriage, he had already urged in a previous letter (2 Cor. vi. 14). But what of a Christian who, after conversion, had to face marriage with a partner who stood outside the saints ? Was not separation or divorce justified in this case ?

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[1] G. F. Moore, *Judaism*, ii. 123; B. Z. Bokser, *Pharisaic Judaism in Transition*, pp. 85 f.

[2] On which see 'The Excepting Clause' in *Theology* (1938), pp. 27–36.

The explicit care with which Paul here and in verse 25 distinguishes between what is his own ruling (**not the Lord's**) and a definite saying of the Lord (verse 10) is a significant indication that, even although as a prophet he had divine revelations, he did not cast them into the form of what Jesus had once said, in order to invest them with authority. Apostles and prophets as well as teachers (xii. 28) drew on a living tradition of eye-witnesses which preserved utterances of Jesus, and their responsible task was primarily to transmit such original sayings. It was plainly a responsibility which was felt to involve not merely keenness of memory, but scrupulous veracity. An incidental remark like this of Paul tells against the notion that gifted men in the primitive communities felt inspired to produce, by a free use of their devout imagination, sayings of the Lord to suit the requirements of the cult. Words of Jesus might be and were modified as well as moulded in the course of transmission, but they did not come into being by a process of spontaneous generation. Whether Paul carried such sayings entirely in his memory or whether they were already written down, it is not possible to say ; they formed an important part of his **methods in Christ Jesus** (see above, p. 51). But the clear point is that he drew a line between such authenticated sayings and his own opinions, even when the latter were 'opinions' in a judicial sense. If anyone in the primitive Church had creative literary genius, it was Paul. It is historically of high importance that he did not feel at liberty to create a saying of Jesus, even when, as here, it would have been highly convenient in order to settle a disputed point of Christian behaviour.

12 **To other people I would say (not the Lord) :—**
if any brother has a wife who is not a believer,

and if she consents to live with him,
he must not put her away ;
and if any wife has a husband who is not a believer, 13
and if he consents to live with her,
she must not put her husband away.
For the unbelieving husband is consecrated in the person 14
of his wife,
and the unbelieving wife is consecrated in the person of
the Christian brother she has married ;

otherwise, of course, your children would be unholy instead of being consecrated to God. (Should the unbe- 15
lieving partner be determined to separate, however, separation let it be ; in such cases the Christian brother or sister is not tied to marriage.) It is to a life of peace that God has called you. O wife, how do you know you may not save 16
your husband ? O husband, how do you know you may not save your wife ?

On a point which the **Lord** had not had occasion to decide, 12
Paul's personal judgement is, unlike the harsh nationalistic ruling of Ezra long ago (Ezra x. 10 f.), that in the case of **other people,** who find themselves tied to a non-Christian partner, the decision must be left to that partner. **Live with** implies cohabitation, a real marriage such as is sketched in verses 3–4. It is assumed that the pagan partner is dutiful and affectionate. The reason for maintaining wedlock, on these conditions, depends on Paul's strong belief in the effects of sexual union. Just as this union, in the case of casual connexion with a prostitute (vi. 16), means a lowering of the personality in the community of body, so in the case of married contact with a pure Christian there is a heightening nexus of the personality ; the **consecrated** nature of the Christian partner is somehow 14
imparted to the other. **In the person of** or ' with ' the Christian partner, the other is in a sense drawn within the sphere of a divine ' holiness ' which is bound up not simply with the Christian as such, but with the Christian fulfilling the divine appointment of marriage. The Oriental idea of solidarity in this connexion went so far that some rabbis allowed one

parent in a mixed marriage to convey sanctity to the children ; in rabbinism, if a woman proselyte was pregnant when she was received into the synagogue, her very baptism stood for that of her child (Jebamoth, 78*a*). Paul is not arguing that the mother gave a special stamp of religious privilege to the children of her body. He merely points out that in the one body of true wedlock, even although only one of the pair possesses the divine ' holiness,' that is sufficient to ' consecrate ' the other and to render the children also ' sacred ' to God, instead of leaving them outside the pale. It is an indication of the strange emphasis upon corporate solidarity which emerges in an equally obscure connexion later on (see xv. 29). Formally it goes back to the primitive notion of ' holiness ' as a semi-material contagion which passed from one member of a group to another. On entering the Christian faith, as on entering the Jewish, a householder or head of a family brought the family along with him ; no ancient would have understood the idea of such an individual accepting any responsible relationship to God apart from his immediate group. Small children were admitted even to some of the contemporary cults, for the sake of a devout parent. **Of course,** says Paul, addressing a Christian parent, your children are **consecrated to God** in virtue of your action as their head. If he referred to baptism, it would not be unintelligible, for baptism was a sacrament of the eschatological hope, providing security for the recipients, and at this time Paul expected that most children anyhow would not die before the End. Such baptism would therefore be a reassurance for the Christian parent that he or she would not be separated from the little children by anything that happened at the Advent.

This allusion to children is remarkable for another reason. Paul commonly thinks of childhood as an illustration of immaturity. Some critics have contrasted him unfavourably with Jesus in this respect. Yet it was Paul who, in a later letter to this very church, protested that parents ought to make provision for their children : ' children ought not to lay up for the parents, but parents for their children.' It was Paul, also, who saw in the dependence of little children upon a nursing mother the aptest illustration of what his young Churches required and (he maintained) had received from himself (1 Thess. ii. 7), as he cherished them patiently and tenderly. The apocalyptic tension was not favourable, indeed, to any regard for the family. A Jew regarded marriage chiefly as a means of continuing family life; the procreation of children was its real object. But when the End was imminent, why trouble about a family? Had Paul been no more than a logical apocalyptist, he would have ruled out the family as a Christian unit. Occasionally he does seem to ignore its religious functions altogether. But in the present passage it is clear that, like another unmarried prophet, Jeremiah, he saw more value and meaning in family life than his eschatology involved. Some contemporary rabbis frankly declared that there were enough people to marry and carry on the race; they themselves might well be exempt from this duty for the sake of a more undivided devotion to the Lord and the Law. Such was probably Paul's personal feeling before his conversion, and he retained it as an apostle of Christ. When reinforced by the strong apocalyptic belief which pervades this letter, it might well have made him regardless of such an item as the children of a mixed marriage. Yet it is not so. How could a Christian parent bear to think of the **children** as **unholy,** even although the other partner in the marriage was not a member of the Church? Paul enters into this parental feeling, for once, with humane, religious sympathy; it is a passing allusion, but it throws light on his deeper conception of the family underneath all apocalyptic prepossessions, and also on his genuine sympathy with human ties in which he himself had no direct share. He certainly had a kindlier eye for childhood than his younger contemporary Epictetus had. His words are all the more significant as they are almost incidental; his later counsel on family life proves that they were not accidental.

By way of parenthesis, he explains that the Christian partner 15 must not oppose the pagan, should the latter insist upon divorce. This is a case in which the prohibition of divorce does not hold. Only, the first step in the separation has to be taken by the non-Christian partner. Naturally it is implied that the Christian brother or sister has given no ground for such action by any personal misconduct; perhaps also, though this is not so clear, that he or she was now free to re-marry (verse 39).

Returning to the thought of 12–14, Paul adds a fresh reason for the Christian adhering to marriage with a pagan. **It is to a life of peace,** not in this case to separation or the breaking of the marriage tie, **that God has called you** as Christians; if
16 your pagan partner consents or agrees heartily to maintain marital relations and to continue family life, why sever the tie, especially as you may **save** your pagan wife or husband, if you are patient and friendly? It is thus clear that **consecrated** (in verse 14) only means a sort of objective relationship to 'holiness.' Within this, one may be won over to the faith by the influence and example (see 1 Peter iii. 1) of a good wife or husband. His hopefulness on this point shows that he really held a nobler view of marriage than his unqualified words (in verses 2 and 9) would suggest. The counsel here would therefore be one application of the advice given to the Roman Christians, 'to live at peace with all, as much as lieth in you.' If it is possible, and so long as it is possible, to carry on a mixed marriage, with all its difficulties and temptations, it is well worth while to maintain these close, amicable relations, since they afford a real opportunity for winning over the non-Christian partner to the Christian position. The Greek, however, might mean a less hopeful outlook; 'How knowest thou whether thou shalt save thy' wife or husband? Those who accept this interpretation make the question a reason for agreeing to separation (verse 15) as though Paul were dissuading the husband from obliging his wife to remain married, or the wife from attempting to induce her husband to keep up the marriage tie. 'No, the Christian has more to do than to spend strength and time in maintaining a marital relationship which involves a strain on the temper; God has called us Christians to a life of peace, not of wrangling and cross-purposes.' This makes good sense, but the other interpretation suits the paragraph better; **peace** is opposed to a break-off, not to domestic friction. In fact, Paul is summing up his

counsel by reiterating the advice of 12–14, which is his main idea, after the parenthesis in verse 15.

It is worth notice, whatever view we take of verse 16, that while Paul adheres to the indissolubility of marriage, as Jesus had taught, he knew too much of human nature to insist that it should be rigidly applied in every case. In this case of mixed marriages, two modifications are introduced : (*a*) the woman who has separated is allowed (verse 11) to remain single, if she prefers, or if nothing else can be done, and (*b*) divorce is tolerated, in the circumstances mentioned, though it must never be sought by the Christian partner.

The general idea of the next paragraph (17–24), that a Christian need not and must not be eager to alter his or her condition in life, follows the dissuasion against divorce with a certain fitness. Christian freedom is not a spirit in haste to dissolve existing relationships. Marriage has furnished a special instance of this principle, but the apostle considers it so important that he proceeds to state it crisply and widely before he advances to some other aspects of Christian marriage. Still, the sequence is abrupt, and the paragraph may have originally belonged to the earlier letter (see above, p. xxiv.), though it is linked to the context here less abruptly than the other fragment is in 2 Cor. vi. 14–vii. 1. A less natural alternative would be to suppose that the passage originally lay at the end of the discussion, after verse 40. The present context implies that the new consciousness of freedom in the local church had led some to raise the question whether a slave, for example, was not entitled to attempt some means of altering his social condition.

Only, everyone must lead the lot assigned him by the Lord ; he 17
must go on living the life in which God's call came to him.
(Such is the rule I lay down for all the churches.)
Was a man circumcised at the time he was called ? 18
Then he is not to efface the marks of it.
Has any man been called when he was uncircumcised ?
Then he is not to get circumcised.

19 **Circumcision counts for nothing, uncircumcision counts for nothing ; obedience to God's commands is everything.**
20 **Everyone must remain in the condition of life where he was**
21 **called. You were a slave when you were called ? Never mind. Of course, if you do find it possible to get free, you**
22 **had better avail yourself of the opportunity. But a slave who is called to be in the Lord is a freedman of the Lord.**
23 **Just as a free man who is called is a slave of Christ for (you were bought for a price ; you must not turn slaves to any**
24 **man). Brothers, everyone must remain with God in the condition of life where he was called.**

17 '**Only,** after all this discussion of the pros and cons about altering one's status, what I have to say is this (i.e. in view either of 10–16 or of 39–40).' The function of **the Lord** in settling the providential circumstances of one's earthly lot is intelligible in the light of viii. 6. Incidentally Paul declares that his **rule,** though it may seem hard, was the regular principle **for all the churches** (see on i. 2).

18 The first case in point (*a*) was that of male Christians who had been circumcised when Jews, and who wondered whether they should not undergo the operation, to which some renegade Jews submitted (1 Macc. i. 15, 4 Macc. v. 2), of effacing the marks, in order to avoid taunts when they stripped naked at the baths or for athletic games. Others seriously wondered whether, as born pagans, they should not undergo circumcision in order to complete their membership in the chosen People of God. The former idea was due to false shame. The latter was a mistaken form of earnestness ; it could not have been pressed at Corinth by any of the parties, for Paul does not treat it so seriously as he does in Galatians (vi. 13, 14), where
19 he is facing a definite propaganda by Jewish Christians. His quiet answer to both is on the lines of Romans ii. 28 f. To the one he replies, ' Never be ashamed of your circumcision-marks, for **circumcision** is merely an outward sign ' ; to the other, ' Never set your heart upon this, since it **counts for nothing** in real Christianity.' The calm way in which he rules out circumcision indicates again (see p. 65) the high consciousness of

spiritual independence in his Christianity; instead of being obligatory, as Jews believed, it is viewed as outside the sphere of **obedience to commands of God!** The one thing that counts in Christianity is such obedience, or, as he puts it elsewhere, **faith active in love,** or **the new creation** (Gal. v. 6, vi. 15). The 20
second case (*b*) is that of gentile slaves whose humble **condition of life** (see above, pp. xxi. f., and on i. 26 f.) made some of them resent it as unworthy of their new Christian dignity. **Never** 21
mind echoes a common Stoic phrase, 'Why mind that?,' applied to external things as being indifferent to the inner freedom of the soul. This is the point of Paul's reminder that the Christian slave enjoyed spiritual freedom with his Lord, however he might be the thrall of an earthly lord. Parenthetically (as in verse 15 above) he allows the slave to get manumitted if he has the opportunity, i.e. if his master was willing that he should buy his freedom. Such an opportunity might occur, though Greeks were less liberal than Romans in freeing slaves. The Greek might also mean, 'even though you can become free, rather employ your slavery' (to be a better slave—in the sense of 1 Tim. vi. 2), but this is less natural linguistically and suits the context less aptly. Paul 22
does not share the view of Epictetus, himself a slave at one time, that the slave is really better off as a slave than as a freedman. 'The slave longs to be set free at once; his idea is that up till now he is hampered and unfortunate because he is not emancipated. Once I am set free, he says, all is well; I heed no one, I talk to everybody as their equal, like themselves; I come and go exactly as I please. Well, he gets emancipated, and,' Epictetus adds (iv. 1. 33), finding himself unemployed and hungry he becomes the slave of lust and hunger, flattering other people in order to satisfy his appetites. Thus he may become even what Paul calls one of the **slaves to** 23
man by submitting to prejudice, allowing others to rule his life. Whereas, the Stoic concluded, 'no man is free who can be hindered or forced by anyone else at will' (iv. 1 58). It was a common maxim of contemporary Roman and Greek thought that the true freedom was inward; even a slave can be free, if he possesses inner freedom—a thing which many

so-called free folk lack, with their slavery to passions, opinions, and social customs. Paul's argument is that even if a Christian slave has no chance of securing freedom, he is **a freedman of the Lord ;** he enjoys the supreme boon of belonging to a heavenly Master. It is not the ethical freedom won by self-mastery, but the religious freedom of being a member of the Lord's household, and therefore being freed from such tyrannies as evil powers and passions. The freedman, or *libertinus*, still owed some service to his lord or patron, by Roman law ; he had to take his patron's name and belong to his household, but it was to a *patronus*, not to a *dominus*, or lord, that he now belonged. Paul deliberately employs the paradox of **a freedman of the Lord,** in order to bring out the thought that this inner relationship of the spirit was 'a service which is perfect freedom.'

'Be not ye the servants of men,' is one of Paul's rich asides. There was indeed a good sense in which one might be the slave of others (as in ix. 19, 2 Cor. iv. 5). Here it is meant in a lower sense. The words (**you must not turn slaves to any man**) are not to be taken literally. Some free-born provincials would apparently become slaves of an influential Roman, in order to be manumitted by him, so securing his patronage in society and thereby winning promotion. But Corinthian slaves, such as Paul addressed, were in a very different position. One might desire to be circumcised, but hardly to enter or re-enter slavery, although it has been sometimes thought that such an idea lies behind xiii. 3, or that certain enthusiastic Corinthians may have actually deprecated the desire for emancipation on the ground that it meant an undue, slavish regard for human rank and social position. What the apostle is really thinking of is something that lay close to his own heart, the risk, of which he was aware in his missions (Gal. iv. 17, 2 Cor. xi. 20), of strong individuals being allowed to take advantage of pliable souls by dictating to them. As a leader himself, he was alive to the danger, and strove to avoid it. He realized that Christian freedom had not only to be won, or rather received, but kept carefully, against party-leaders who sought for lower ends to impose their opinions upon the rank and file, as well as against movements which compromised the spiritual independence of the Church (Gal. iv. 9 f.). As in x. 29, as here, we catch a flash of his concern for the inherent rights of freedom in Christian people. It is one thing for the immature to accept guidance, or for the inexperienced to follow the lead of a stronger character; but this, he felt, easily slips into a weak, comfortable deference which, by practically handing over mind and will to a spiritual director, prevented people from growing into a mature relationship towards their real Lord. At Corinth some were quick-witted, rather self-assertive, apt to resent authority and to criticize their leaders too freely. But Paul also found, or feared, an inclination on the part of others towards an undue subservience, which was content to allow some dominating personality to overpower them. Discipleship here, as elsewhere, had its bad side as well as its good. It might mean an admiring devotion to some commanding spirit, which is one source of moral and spiritual progress; but it might also reduce life to little more than an echo or slavish copy of what others said or did. With characteristic breadth of judgement he shows himself alive to both tendencies, to thin self-importance and to an unwholesome surrender of one's personality.

The paragraph closes with a reiteration of what he had just 24 said, **with God** echoing the word about **God's commands,** as though to remind his readers that no lot is so bare and hard that it need be without the presence of God and some opportunity to honour him. Though he does not repeat the term *klêsis* or **condition of life** from verse 20, he means that the Christian vocation may be followed in any social avocation in which one finds oneself placed (by God). Plainly the Christian faith was beginning to invest this Greek word with a new significance. Believing that the existing conditions of life were divinely planned for Christians, and that even a slave's position did not hinder the good life, Paul extends the idea of the inner call to include the outward circumstances in which it was experienced. If **obedience to God's commands** is feasible in any such conditions (and the question of inconsistent occupations is not yet raised), then these conditions might be called providential.

God gives to every man
The virtues, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill.

Cowper's rather comfortable faith goes beyond what Paul has in mind here, but the apostle would have agreed in principle ; if Christians were chosen from the beginning in the plan of God, surely their station in life entered into their calling. What he is concerned with, however, is the truth that outward circumstances are secondary. Circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or free, married or unmarried—what does that matter ? One can belong to Christ and serve him in any of these spheres during the short time that remains, and that is the main point. Although the apostle never explicitly describes so-called ' secular ' work as a vocation for the Christian, still, by speaking of marriage, for example, as a sphere where one may not only serve God, but **save** others, and by the new stamp which he sets on *klêsis*, he is adumbrating the later idea.

After this digression the apostle returns to the problem of marriage. It was being much discussed, even outside the Church. Musonius Rufus at Rome, himself a married man and of undeviating public spirit, refused steadily to encourage celibacy, since marriage was the basis of the home and the home of the State. But this ethical demand that the good man ought to face up to the duties of ordinary life in the family was not admitted in some circles where the higher life of moral achievement was the predominant issue. Paul, who meets the question on the basis of unworldly devotion to the Lord, takes the view that to keep unmarried is best, in view of the imminent End and its distress on earth (25–31) ; besides, this leaves one more free for God's service (32–35) ; in the circumstances marriage is inexpedient, and yet, at the same time, better marriage than worse evils (36–38) ! In all that follows he gives his personal opinions or judgements, and it is characteristic that he does not demand obedience to them by affirming, ' Follow my example of strength ! If I can do without marriage, so can you, so must you.' Instead of dictating to them—**not that I want to restrict your freedom**—he begins by suggesting why his advice may be trusted. Only at the very end, anticipating criticism from some of the local malcontents, does he reassert his authoritative position as an apostle (40).

I have no orders from the Lord for unmarried women, but I will 25
give you the opinion of one whom you can trust, after all
the Lord's mercy to him. Well, what I think is this : that, 26
considering the imminent distress in these days, it would
be an excellent plan for you to remain as you are.

On a point for which he had **no orders from the Lord** Jesus, in 25
the traditional sayings, he modestly offers his own **opinion** (as in 2 Cor. viii. 8, 10) as a trustworthy (see iv. 2) person. The fact of **the Lord's mercy to him,** which includes his call to apostleship (1 Thess. ii. 4, 2 Cor. iv. 1), is a reason for trusting his judgement ; there is a humble suggestion that he is not likely to seek slaves to his own views, but that his experience has given him a disinterested and watchful concern for others. The trust exhibited by the Lord in being merciful to him may encourage the Corinthians to rely upon him as a truly responsible adviser. **Unmarried women,** a class omitted in his previous judgement (verse 8), receive the same warning to **remain** in the condition of life where they are, but for a fresh reason— 26
considering the imminent distress in these days, when the End was near, with its terrible disorders on earth, which were specially sore upon mothers, according to eschatological tradition (Enoch xcix. 5, Mark xiii. 17). The English Version, 'it is good for a man so to be,' misses the thought that 'a man' here is 'a human being,' with primary reference to women, although Paul at once (27) extends his range to men as well. Technically it would be correct to render, 'that human beings should remain just as they are.' In the contemporary Syriac apocalypse of Baruch (x. 14), the delineation of the woes before the End includes this trait : 'the barren shall above all rejoice, and the childless shall be glad, but mothers of children shall have anguish.' As the crisis affects men no less than women, however, Paul continues his warning with married people of both sexes in view, as indeed he would be doing from

the first if the Greek words rendered **unmarried women** were taken to mean celibates, i.e. not only women but (as in Rev. xiv. 3) males who had never had any sexual experience.

27 **Are you tied to a wife ? Never try to untie the knot.**
Are you free ? Never try to get married.
28 **Of course, if you are actually married, there is no sin in that ;**
and if a maid marries, there is no sin in that.
(At the same time those who marry will have outward
29 **trouble—and I would spare you that.) I mean, brothers—**
the interval has been shortened ;
so let those who have wives live as if they had none,
30 **let mourners live as if they were not mourning,**
let the joyful live as if they had no joy,
let buyers live as if they had no hold upon their goods,
31 **let those who mix in the world live as if they were not engrossed in it, for the present phase of things is passing away.**

28 **There is no sin in** marriage, he repeats, as if to guard against any misinterpretation of what he had rather unguardedly said above. The reason for discouraging matrimony is not that sexual union is in itself illegitimate, but that in the special circumstances it is inadvisable. Paul is not a full-blown ascetic who welcomes any pain for others as well as for himself. The **outward trouble** (literally ' in the flesh '), which he would fain have his friends escape, is the anguish over premature birth and other sorrows which the married especially would encounter in the social and political overthrow which heralded the downfall of the world. Any additional tie like marriage
29 means a fresh source of trouble. Besides, is it worth while to marry ? Has not the period before the End been **shortened** ? That the time before the Crisis (as he calls it in Rom. xiii. 11–12), or the **interval** of painful waiting, had been mercifully curtailed by God, was an apocalyptic belief, inherited by the primitive Church from Judaism (Mark xiii. 17, 22). Why, then, marry, when all such earthly ties and forms of interest had better be

replaced by a detachment of heart, in view of the Lord's coming? **The present** scene, or scheme of things, is but a 31 passing **phase,** not final; it is not even a shifting scene, for the last Act of the divine drama is imminent. Paul's rhapsody here recalls the Stoic preaching of calm detachment from mundane ties, though the Stoics held no vivid eschatological beliefs. 'Look at Socrates; he had a wife and children, but he treated them as if they did not belong to him . . . when he had to plead for his life, did he behave like a man who had a wife and children? No, he behaved as one who is free, one who remembers that love to God comes first' (Epictetus, iv. 1. 159 f., iii. 24. 60). It is on this line that Paul writes, **so let those who have wives live as if they had none.** The entire passage is a lyrical outburst upon renunciation of the world as the other side of absolute devotion to the Lord. It is not to be read as if it were a cool protocol on conduct, as though, for example, he was taking back what he had said on marriage in verses 3–5; it is a passionate, heroic reminder that the Christian life must never be identified with even the nearest and dearest of worldly experiences, however legitimate and appealing they may be. Marriage, grief, happiness, and trade—against none of them in themselves has the apostle a word to say. Only, they are not everything for a Christian. Roman Stoicism had taught men to take a similarly detached attitude towards the good things of this life. In his seventy-fourth epistle, for example, Seneca finely pled that we should 'consider such things as handed over to us for a time, remembering that they are really foreign to us. . . . They may come very close to us, but never must they adhere to us so closely that their removal would distract or upset life.' Paul's similar counsel is derived from a thrilling religious motive of his own, however. For him everything shrinks into insignificance beside the glory of being a Christian (see on xv. 32). He cannot conceive that anything really matters except devotion to the joy of belonging to the Lord and being at his disposal. It is the spirit of the passage, not the letter, which is vital. What he contributed to the unworldliness of the Church by such teaching was not lost, even when the eschatological setting became less convincing. The best minds in Christendom responded to this appeal, never to allow even innocent or useful interests to detach them from loyalty to the Lord. It is noteworthy that Epictetus himself bore testimony to this quality of the Christian faith soon afterwards. These Galileans, he frankly admitted, are noted for their supreme interest in spiritual things, ranking all else secondary; in lecturing on the need of a spirit which does not set its heart upon material possessions, even as it enjoys them (and he includes wife and children), he took occasion to point out that 'the Galileans are trained to this attitude of the soul by habit' (iv. 7. 5, 6).

Paul now concludes with an expansion (32–35) of what he had said in the parenthesis of verse 28, though the **anxieties** are still connected with marriage.

32 **I want you to be free from all anxieties.**
The unmarried man is anxious about the Lord's affairs,
how best to satisfy the Lord;
33 **the married man is anxious about worldly affairs,**
34 **how best to satisfy his wife—so he is torn in two directions.**
The unmarried woman or the maid* is also anxious about the Lord's affairs,
how to be consecrated, body and spirit;
once married, she is anxious about worldly affairs,
how best to satisfy her husband.
35 **I am saying this in your own interests. Not that I want to restrict your freedom; it is only to secure decorum and concentration upon a life of devotion to the Lord.**

* Reading ἡ γυνὴ ἡ ἄγαμος καὶ ἡ παρθένος with p^{15} B P, the Vulgate, etc.

32 'To have a wife and to have children means many an anxiety in life for a father,' the Greek poet Menander (xi. 6, xv. 33) observed. Paul plays on the double sense of **anxious**; the right concern is for the interests or **affairs** of the Lord (see xii. 25, Rom. viii. 8, and Phil. ii. 29), the wrong is for personal

affairs connected with this world (as in Matt. vi. 25 f.). It 33
is from the latter that he wishes to free any Corinthians who
are thinking of marriage. Any division of interests means 34
that one is **torn in two directions.** He selects a verb (*memeristai*)
which has a certain assonance with the word for **anxieties**
(*merimnai*), but it is common in this sense of distraction. He 35
disclaims once more (23) any idea of trying to shackle or
restrict their **freedom** by thus heading them off marriage; it
is in their **own interests** (26, 28), he pleads, and as usual his
motive is religious. **Decorum** might mean that, in vindicating
an unmarried Christian woman's position as honourable in the
sight of God, he was freeing her from the stigma which was
generally attached to spinsters in ancient society. But this
would only cover one class of those mentioned. **Decorum** in
English, as well as in Latin, evades definition, though, as it
includes the idea of seemliness or moral propriety, it would
embrace here freedom from any moral laxity such as the
apostle has been denouncing in the above discussion. The
term is opposed to the unbecoming, distracted state (verse 34)
which Paul seems naïvely to regard as inevitable for married
persons. It has thus a wider range than in 1 Thess. iv. 12 or
in Rom. xiii. 13 or even in xii. 24 below. The closing adverb,
'free from distraction' (**concentration**) comes from an adjective afterwards used by Epictetus in replying to a young man
who asked if a real philosopher should regard marriage and a
family as primary duties (iii. 22. 67 f.): 'As things are,' the
anxious enquirer was told, 'in the present state of the world,
which is that of a battle-field, may it not be the Cynic's duty
to be free from distraction in order to serve God utterly. . . .
Ordinarily marriage is very liable to distraction, so that we
do not find upon enquiry that marriage is a primary concern
for the Cynic.'

The English Version ('. . . how he may please his wife. And 34
there is a difference also between the wife and the virgin')
represents a different punctuation and rendering of the text
which arose in the second century; but this gives a weak,
flat sense to *memeristai*. **Torn** or drawn **in two directions** is the
one meaning of the verb here. Whether Paul was thinking of

the story now recorded in Luke x. 40–42, the modern reader thinks of it as he listens to this plea for undivided attention and unreserved surrender to the Lord. It is noble, searching counsel, written out of his very soul. We need not, of course, take it too literally, as though he had forgotten a devoted couple like Aquila and Priscilla beside him, when he criticizes marriage so severely and idealizes bachelors and spinsters as if they were invariably unselfish. Not all unmarried men used their life for higher ends, as he himself did. Generalizations like this, even from the lips of an apostle, require to be taken with several grains of salt, especially as the passage is too grave to permit any hypothesis that it is touched with irony. It is indeed true that a man with a family may be tempted, if not forced, to forego some higher duties which otherwise he would have undertaken, just as he may be obliged, or think himself obliged, for the family's sake, to compromise his principles now and then. The domesticated may well lose any public spirit which they once possessed. It was said by an Englishman that the devil comes to an Englishman in the shape of his wife and family. Yet the devil can get at the unmarried as easily, in other ways. Paul must have known this, though he does not choose to blunt the edge of his thrust by introducing any of the qualifications which became needful when it was realized that the world was not to end in the present generation. The fact is, this discussion of marriage is ending, as it began, with a rather limited appreciation of wedlock, which does not compare favourably with the noble estimate of a Roman Stoic like Musonius Rufus, in his tracts upon the subject. The moralist on his sedate level does fuller justice than the evangelist, more than once, to a relationship which provides opportunities of its own for self-denial, unselfish affection, and religious growth, while his words on the unmarried state do not sound so detached from the realities of life. The whole discussion at one or two points fails to show Paul at his best, for all its magnificent recall to unworldliness. To secure single-minded **devotion to the Lord,** it is needful to be more than unmarried, and the married are not necessarily handicapped in attaining this high end. As, indeed, the apostle himself allows elsewhere, when the tension of his mind over the immediacy of the End is relaxed.

A breach of **decorum**, however, in the special sense of sexual impropriety (as in Rom. i. 27), may arise when marriage is eschewed. Paul now handles this (in 36–38), and his method is another indication that some hesitation was stirring in his mind as he realized what was happening to some venturesome champions of celibacy. Evidently this particular case had emerged at Corinth, according to the letter of the church. It is the case of some

> youth to whom was given
> So much of earth, so much of heaven,
> And such impetuous blood—

some enthusiast of the Spirit belonging to a group which believed that they should and could live on earth as they were soon to live in heaven, where there was to be neither marrying nor giving in marriage; they resolved to furnish here and now a symbolic reproduction of the perfect life with God in the New Age which was about to dawn. Their ascetic zeal so exalted them that, defying the ordinary impulses and passions of sex, they sought to show worldly Christians what marriage ought to be—a common **devotion to the Lord** and yet an avoidance of sexual intercourse, a union of two spirits, in fact, not of two bodies. Such seems to be the situation, though the data are by no means free from uncertainty. An anticipation of this strange custom had been introduced even into Judaism by the holiness movement of the Therapeutæ in Egypt, some of whom lived together under a mild vow of continence. In the Church it was eschatological as well as ascetic enthusiasm which prompted the move, however, and developed it into a heroic form of spiritual achievement. The man and woman were spiritually married, but that was all. It is one illustration of how much was going on at this time in the Church of which we know little or nothing, during the second half of the first century. Were it not for the happy accident of an unhappy irreverence in the Corinthian church, for example, we would have practically no evidence, for about a century after the crucifixion, that the eucharist was celebrated or how it was celebrated. So with vicarious baptism for the dead, the evidence for which only begins to appear about the very time when data become accessible about spiritual marriages on the part of exalted prophets in some quarters of the Christian mission, proving that the practice was, and had been, widely current. The present paragraph attests the phenomenon at Corinth, though traces of its full bloom are soon to be found in the second century, from Antioch to Rome, from Syria to North Africa. The Coptic version attests it for Egypt. It was only in the beginning of the fourth century that some synods of the Church denounced the practice, owing to the prevalence of scandals such as Paul dreads in his discussion of the case.

Upon the whole, therefore, this paragraph is a pendant to the foregoing sentence as well as to the foregoing counsel to men in 32, 33.

36 **At the same time, if any man considers that he is not behaving properly to the maid who is his spiritual bride, if his passions are strong and if it must be so, then let him do what he**
37 **wants—let them be married ; it is no sin for him. But the man of firm purpose who has made up his mind, who instead of being forced against his will has determined to himself to keep his maid a spiritual bride—that man will**
38 **be doing the right thing. Thus both are right, alike in marrying and in refraining from marriage, but he who does not marry will be found to have done better.**

36 The improper or unseemly behaviour is not some physical outrage on the man's part, but a general term for this spiritual comradeship, as the man now judges it ; he **considers** that the right, fair course for himself and his religious mate is to get **married**, since the strain of their ideal connexion is proving too much for flesh and blood. Paul agrees that he should. **It is no sin**, though it would be better if the pair could still have sufficient self-control to live together without any sexual union
37 (as in 8, 9). To the apostle such spiritual marriages are a noble experiment, but unfortunately the flesh is so weak that they are not wise for all. He contemplates the problem from the

standpoint of the man. The woman is **his maid**, literally 'the unmarried woman (34) who belongs to him,' who is under his protection as she shares his religious vocation. Plainly she is not his daughter, since **let them be married** can only refer to the pair in question, just as the rare word for **marry** in verse 38 is used to denote, like our English 'marry,' a man celebrating marriage with a girl as well as a father marrying off his daughter. **Maid** is not an equivalent for 'daughter' in Greek, unless a parent has been explicitly mentioned already. The plural of the verb here is therefore almost decisive against the notion that some ascetically minded parent or guardian was preventing a daughter or ward from getting married. Conceivably, indeed, a man might be betrothed to a girl, but, owing to ultra-spiritual scruples, he might be keeping her in this position at first, instead of consummating the marriage, persuading her and even himself that such a nominal tie must stand for a real marriage in the case of real Christians, though it is prosaic to suppose that Paul thought of a Christian in the position of a Palestinian Jew who began to feel the sexual urge before the year of betrothal was over. **His maid** is hardly an equivalent for 'betrothed.' The Greeks, for whom Paul was writing, had a word of their own for this, as they had for 'daughter,' and Paul knew Greek well enough to have employed it if he required to do so. The natural and appropriate sense of **maid** is the maid or virgin who is **his spiritual bride.** It is, in short, a case of the elementary, early relationship which soon afterwards developed into the *virgines subintroductæ* of the later Church; Ephraim Syrus, who knew this queer phenomenon at first hand, has no hesitation in interpreting the passage thus. It was when knowledge of it had vanished, or when the Church did not care to believe that it had ever existed in the primitive days, that the devout either allegorized the passage or readjusted Paul's advice to fit a supposed exercise of the *patria potestas* by some imperious father who claimed to rule a grown-up daughter's life by his own rigorist scruples.

The rare word rendered **if his passions be strong** denotes the 36
surge of sexual passion which some were able to control, while

others felt they must yield to it **against** their **will**, or (as we say) in spite of their original determination and judgement. To render this 'as past the flower of her age' or bloom is doubly wrong, for there is no change of subject, and there would be no point in marrying off a woman after she had reached a certain age of maturity. Though Paul does not go into details, he is obviously dealing with the case of a religious couple who discover after a year or two that their relationship is becoming too severe a trial for human nature. The man becomes aware (perhaps the **girl** told him so) that it was no longer fair to her ; also his own full-blooded life was being dangerously stirred by the close, physical associations into which they were thrown as they lived and travelled together in the Christian mission. It is to some such situation, created by
37 a heroic but risky enthusiasm, that Paul addresses himself. He desires that such spiritual marriages should be continued ; to him they are, like *glossolalia*, an amazing proof of the Spirit's triumph over human passions and faculties. They are **the right thing** for the right spirit of **firm purpose**. Yet, with a flash of the good sense which in this chapter repeatedly balances his exalted hopes and steadies his spiritual demands,
38 he will not have the **better** course compromised by Christians who unfortunately are unequal to its exacting discipline. Literally the words about being not **forced against his will** mean 'hath power over his own will,' and **will** might be the sexual impulse, as it is in John i. 13 ; it has a broader sense here, but what compels a man to take the course of marriage, in the circumstances, is the need of doing something to prevent this imperious impulse from driving him to an immoral satisfaction.

On hearing his directions about marriage read over by the amanuensis, Paul adds a final postscript to the ruling that a woman must **remain single** if she separated from her husband (verse 11).

39 **A woman is bound to her husband during his lifetime ; but if he dies she is free to marry anyone she pleases—only it**
40 **must be a Christian. However, she is happier if she remains**

as she is ; that is my opinion—and I suppose I have the Spirit of God as well as other people !

His earlier prohibition of mixed marriages (in 2 Cor. vi. 14 f.) had evidently been resented by some feminist champions as an infringement of Christian liberty. But he foresaw that spiritual rigorists might also criticize him for admitting any second marriage, that being for them a breach of spirituality. Hence the fresh (ii. 16), half ironical assertion of his apostolic 40
right to give a decision as well as other leaders who might claim inspired authority for advocating either perfect freedom, not only to marry, but to marry more than once and to marry anybody, or else abstinence from second marriage at all. **Happier** suggests not merely freedom from **trouble** (verse 28), but the blessed freedom of being able to devote herself to the Lord's affairs. Paul's ideal for a widow, whose husband had 'passed to his rest,' is a *univira* (Luke ii. 36 f.) like Hannah. His influence told strongly on the later Church, even though rigorists disliked his permission of second marriage. The 39
reason why he speaks of the matter at all, in connexion with women and not with widowers, is that in ancient society the position of a widow was specially precarious if she had no private means. Many became dependent on charity (Acts vi. 1, James i. 27), while others longed for re-marriage on this as well as on other grounds.

IS IT PERMISSIBLE FOR A CHRISTIAN TO EAT FOOD WHICH HAS BEEN FORMALLY CONSECRATED TO AN IDOL ?

(viii. 1–xi. 2)

He now turns to another issue. Prejudices as well as passions were creating trouble in the Church, and the difficulty arose over food. Some of the Christians at Rome had taken to religious vegetarianism, but this did not appeal even to the ascetics at Corinth, though such a form of self-denial was practised in the local Orphic cult. Neither was the friction over ‘kosher’ food, as it had been at Antioch, for there was no strife at Corinth between Jewish and gentile members of the Church. The issue arose over food which had been formally consecrated to some pagan deity; the meat supply locally came from this source in large measure, and it roused scruples. Paul could not answer the question so simply as he had done at Antioch. It had become acute since he left Corinth. **Food offered to idols** is one word in Greek. Pious pagans spoke of *theothuta* or *hierothuta*, food sacrificed to some deity, but Jews had scornfully turned the term into *eidolothuta*, ‘food offered to idols!’ No strict Jew would touch it. This food-tabu was used by Jews in applying the first commandment to the differentiation between themselves and gentiles. But some Christians did not feel bound by any such restriction. They would not hesitate to attend a club dinner in some temple, under the nominal patronage of a deity, where such food was served; they would buy meat from the market which had belonged to a sacrificial animal, or they would eat such a dish freely at dinner, without being conscious that they were doing anything inconsistent with their Christian principles. If at Corinth they were told of the Jerusalem decree against eating *eidolothuta*, they probably resented or scorned the idea that they should be hampered by any local edict of the Palestinian churches which enforced such irrelevant scruples. ‘We Christians know better; an idol is nothing to us.’ When the hunting club of the Artemisians held a banquet, for example, they began by sacrificing part of the meat to Artemis, their patron deity. Or a private party might be given, nominally as a ‘table of lord Serapis,’ the proceedings being opened by a similar sacrifice. It was all part and parcel of the formal etiquette in society. Were Christian churchmen to cut themselves off from these entertainments, in a nervous, sour spirit? If idols meant nothing to them, if they made no secret of their utter indifference to the traditional religious setting, and if no pagan friend objected, why raise scruples and give way to fads? So they argued. But some of their fellow-members shuddered at the very thought of eating food which had been contaminated by consecration to an idol. Dæmons could not only possess human souls but infect food, they believed. They were as upset by this frank conduct of the liberal majority as some others were at Rome over a refusal to practise vegetarianism (see Romans xiv.). To them it was a dreadful and dangerous exposure of the soul to pagan spirits of evil, if anyone ate food which must surely be charged with their impure, potent influence.

As in handling the sex-question, so here; Paul has his own opinion, and he does not conceal it, but he makes generous allowance for the weaker party and pleads with the enlightened to be tolerant and considerate. The spirit of his treatment is timeless, though the special features of the situation are a thing of the past. It is not only his decision, but the temper in which he would have it taken, which is so valuable. The local difference of judgement had raised the problem of religious scruples, which required to be handled with sympathy as well as with firmness. Scruples invariably point to a sensitive conscience; it may be unenlightened, but it is alive to the truth that religious principles ought to be carried out with care, and that they often imply attention to some practical detail of food or dress or ritual. People who have certain scruples about the proper expression of their faith in social or private conduct are at any rate upon a higher level than many who are content to do as others do in their circle, without examining the situation for themselves in the light of their beliefs. On the other hand, scruples, however honest, may be equally out of touch with the centre. They may be due to the survival of some traditional prejudice which has been carried over into a new faith where it is really irrelevant; if so, the mind may be unduly swayed by preconceived and narrow estimates of right and wrong. Such scruples are apt to arise out of an exaggerated emphasis upon this or that external item, and they may induce a crotchety, nervous, or dictatorial temper, which damages spiritual health. To indulge in scruples may be as weakening as to rely upon what is called a robust common sense. The conscientious person also may become annoying, just as the enlightened man may slip into a brusque impatience with people who timidly shrink from what seems permissible, especially if they seek to fetter his own honest freedom. What, then, is to be done with a tender conscience and its misgivings? It was the first time that the subject had presented itself to the apostle.

viii.

1 **With regard to food that has been offered to idols. Here, of course, 'we all possess knowledge'! Knowledge puffs up,**
2 **love builds up. Whoever imagines he has attained to some degree of knowledge, does not possess the true knowledge**
3–4 **yet; but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him. Now, with regard to food that has been offered to idols, I am well aware that 'there is no such thing as an idol in**
5 **the world,' and that 'there is only the one God.' (So-called gods there may be, in heaven or on earth—as indeed there**
6 **are plenty of them, both gods and 'lords'—but for us**
there is one God, the Father,
from whom all comes,
and for whom we exist;
one Lord, Jesus Christ,
by whom all exists,
and by whom we exist.)
7 **But, remember, it is not everyone who has this 'knowledge.'**

1 In principle he agrees with the enlightened majority at Corinth. Of course, as you say, we all know it is absurd to suppose that meaningless things like idols can taint meat. But he quotes their phrase with a tinge of irony, objecting to the spirit of ostentatious self-complacency underneath it, and interpolating a brief reminder by way of warning before he proceeds. **Knowledge puffs up, love builds up.** Paul is the only writer in the New Testament who uses this term 'puff up,' and, except for one other allusion (in Col. ii. 18), he only uses it in addressing the Corinthian Christians. Strictly speaking, true knowledge does not puff up; the really learned are generally humble, as they think about their attainments, and inclined to be patient with stupid people. But Paul is thinking of the self-conceit which is the plague of enlightened people

who tend to plume themselves on their knowledge of God and man. This leads to an aloof attitude towards the unenlightened; it confuses character with knowledge—the prevailing temptation of the Greek mind. It produces in Christianity what Paul, as a Pharisee, was well conscious of, a superior, if not a scornful attitude towards less educated people. To this he opposes **love,** not because he exalts emotion over knowledge (see Phil. i. 9), but because genuine love attains the experimental knowledge of God which any so-called enlightenment, or 'gnosis,' seeks, and because it **builds up** or edifies. Ethics had already used this architectural metaphor, but our modern term 'edify' has associations of emotional stirring which do not correspond to the original force and range of the word. What 'edifies' is for Paul the powers of thoughtful, considerate fellowship that build up Christians securely. A building is not erected by sudden impulse or emotion, but by patient, skilful use of the materials, with a view to stable cohesion. So the Christian society depends upon the steady support and unselfish interest of every member, and nothing is more irrelevant or detrimental than the temper of arrogant self-importance. Any proud spirit on the part of liberals or 2
enlightened members merely proves that they have failed to understand what **true knowledge** of their God means. He is using **knowledge** here in its familiar sense, common to the Old Testament and to contemporary Hellenistic religion, as a personal relationship between God and man; our modern use of the word is too intellectual for this deeper meaning, as is clear from a passage like xiii. 12. The rebuke to the liberals is therefore twofold. First to their conceit, on characteristically Greek lines; real knowledge is never self-satisfied and supercilious. Anyone who **imagines** that **he has attained** a high level of insight ('some knowledge,' as we say) shows by his self-pretensions that he is still immature. Like a genuine Stoic, like Epictetus (i. 8. 8, *Enchirid.* 13, 48, etc.), Paul repudiates such claims to perfect understanding. It is not, 'he knoweth nothing as he ought to know,' but, he knows nothing that he ought to know; it is **the true knowledge** of God (as in Rom. viii. 26) rather than the right manner of knowledge which is in

question, though naturally the one involves the other. 'You Corinthians know so much, you think. But how much you have still to learn! You are not yet on the inside of things.'

3 And (secondly) this inside reality is a loving concern for others which is inspired by love for God. The sudden turn of expression, as sudden and significant as in Gal. iv. 9, rules out any notion that one owes religious insight to native cleverness or acuteness instead of to divine revelation (as in ii. 9–10); it also emphasizes the character of God as determining the real knowledge of faith. All intuitions of God go back to this personal devotion which he evokes, it is implied; this is the source and the criterion of any advanced enlightenment. To be 'known' is practically the same as to be 'loved' (as in the Johannine interpretation of the faith). Hence to know God is to have the spirit of love. Thus, what another teacher (James iii. 13 f.) expresses in terms of wisdom (see above, i. 19 f.), Paul expresses in terms of brotherly love (in xiii.).

4 'Well, **now,** to come back to our subject. Of course **there is no such thing as an idol in the world,** but **only the one God.'** He does not mean that 'an idol is nothing in the world,' as the English Version after Luther renders the phrase. **Idol** is not a material statue, nor is it equivalent to phantom or 'shadow' or wraith; it is a spiritual power or supernatural force which rivals the one and only God, and as such is a mere 'nonentity,' utterly meaningless to a true Christian, for whom, Paul heartily agrees, **'there is no such thing in'** a **world** where **'there is only the one God.'**

5 Then comes the vital parenthesis. Granted that there are **so-called gods,** or semi-divine beings **and 'lords'** too, in the universe, that means nothing to us, who have the one God and the one Lord. Olympian deities, or divine heroes of high or low degree, nymphs, fauns, and dryads, swarming everywhere—what of it? Later Paul calls them **dæmons** (x. 20), but now, as at Athens (Acts xvii. 16), he scornfully dismisses them as phenomena of polytheism. The Stoic's position was that 'since the gods exist (assuming they exist, as indeed they do), it follows that they are animate beings with a joint control over the one world' (Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, ii. 31). Paul,

writing for Greeks, uses once more (i. 28) the very formulas 6
and phraseology of Greek philosophers ; here it is to describe the **one God from whom, by whom,** and **for whom** creation or the human soul **exists** (as in Rom. xi. 36), as a Stoic spoke about Zeus or Nature. Corinthians knew how in the shrines of a deity like Serapis at Cenchreæ and Corinth the cry went up, 'There is one god, Serapis,' no one like him ! In the Church they had learned to use the phrase in a more profound sense, the nearest approach to it being the homage of the synagogue. 'The Lord our God is one Lord' (the one and only). As for idols, there are indeed **plenty of them,** Paul ironically admits.
The Corinthians could hardly come to church without passing 5
wooden and stone statues of deities, Roman, Greek, and foreign, gilt or vermilion coloured, from the harbour up to the parks, processions of tonsured priests in the streets, shrines of lord Serapis, lord Æsculapius, etc. (see above, pp. xviii.-xix.).
Over and against this motley host, the apostle assumes belief in 6
the **one God** and also in the **one Lord** as a commonplace of Christian faith. It is taken for granted that the faithful are familiar with both aspects of the truth. That **God,** not Zeus, is the **Father** (i. 3), the creator of the universe and the End for his people, that the world was made by him and we **for him,** is correlated with the truth, which distinguished the Christian revelation from its predecessor, Jewish monotheism, that this divine purpose from beginning to end works through the **one Lord, Jesus Christ.** It is one of the unsolved problems of primitive Christianity how Paul reached this interpretation of **God** and **the Lord,** whether along the lines of Wisdom as the divine organ in creation and providence, or through the cognate idea of the Logos. Instead of Son of Man, which Greeks would not understand, Paul preferred to use **Lord** for the royal heavenly being of Jesus as risen. God had been hailed as God of gods and Lord of lords in the Greek Bible (Dan. ii. 47, Ps. cxxxvi. 2, 3, Deut. x. 17) ; Christ is thus **Lord** of all **so-called lords** in the pagan supernatural universe, and yet—this is significant—neither here nor elsewhere is he called God outright. The words **by whom we exist** voice the apostle's deep sense of Christians owing their existence to the Lord Jesus, but this

never puts God into the background. Christianity for him is not a Jesus-cult (see on xv. 28). His faith in **the Lord** is bound up with his faith in the one and only God. Indeed the term **Lord** here is opposed not to God, but to the '**lords**' worshipped in the Hellenistic cults. For Paul the **one Lord** is vitally one with the **one God,** in the experience of Christians, as is incidentally as well as expressly indicated often in this very letter (i. 3, 9, 30, iii. 23, vi. 17–20, xi. 3, 11–12, xv. 28). Originally **Lord,** on the lips of primitive Jerusalem or Palestinian Christians, as a title for the risen Jesus, denoted an approximation of him to God as the divine Son or Servant; the object was to express his close tie to the Father as the revealer of God's will and the realizer of God's saving purpose for the People. This naïve synthesis of the one God and the one Lord went back to the experience created by the resurrection of Christ, and Paul deepens it by using 'in the Lord,' not 'in God,' to bring out the union between this divine Lord and his folk. Jesus as Lord, as the risen and reigning Son of God, mediates fellowship with God in all its power and prospects, as nothing else can do. So vital is this faith to the apostle that he uses it to rule out any possible participation in other 'lord-cults' (x. 14 f.). At Corinth there does not seem to have been any speculative heresy in the direction of syncretism, such as had to be met at Colossæ (see on Col. i. 15 f.); hence the apostle does not need to go into any reasoned statement of the unshared glory of the Lord in mediating union with God. What is implied is, that faith in the **one God,** which Jews confessed in the Shema, and which pagan converts hailed as an intense relief from polytheism (see on 1 Thess. i. 9), was explicit in the belief that the Lord Jesus was living with God, his Head and Father. Faith in God meant in a real sense, therefore, faith in the Son of God (see Gal. ii. 20); indeed, apart from the latter, Paul goes so far as to say that faith in God would have no meaning for him (xv. 17), so deeply had the conviction of Jesus as risen entered into his experience. Even in the Eucharist, where the primary emphasis is upon the tie between the Lord and the faithful, the recognition of the divine covenant (xi. 25) recalls the **one God,** since **covenant** denoted a gracious action and purpose of the God who provided for the interests of the People (see x. 1 f.).

As in Augustine's *Confessions* (i. 1 : 'thou hast made us for thyself'), the personal note after the abstract terms is significant ; twice over it occurs, **all** (things) . . . **we** (see on i. 30). This is in reality a confession of faith. Like 1 Tim. iii. 16, it shows how the initial forms of the creed were intended to be sung or chanted, as spontaneous outbursts of heart and mind. There may be in **from whom all comes** an implicit repudiation of the Greek notion, shared by Philo, that matter was the basis of creation. But belief in one God was far from being a formal item of the confession. Especially for those who had come over from the polytheism of paganism, it expressed their joyous, reverent relief over an escape from bondage to dæmons and evil spirits, just as to-day in some mission-fields of the East 'the Good News *par excellence* is the announcement of the triumph over dæmons by the mighty God come down.' And that among many more than the uncultured. 'The testimony of Utschimura, the Japanese Christian, may almost stand for the confession of all tribes and tongues. "One God," he writes, "not many—that was a glad message to my soul."'[1] Such knowledge, or conviction, was by no means dry theology to eager, primitive Christians.

Now that the parenthesis is over (5, 6), Paul proceeds to 7 deal with the principle in practice. For the essential bearing of any such '**knowledge**' is on conduct. 'We may all have this true belief that idols are of no account ; as you say, all Christians ought to possess it, but **not everyone** is yet able to recognize the full impact of that fundamental principle about being free from scruples about idol-food, of which you are so proud.' The next paragraph (7–13) is an expansion of **love builds up** (verse 1), in view of the local situation, where a minority could not bring themselves to eat such food with the freedom and ease of their emancipated friends the liberals. The '**knowledge**' in which they were defective was not, of course, that of the truth proclaimed in the confession of faith. Belief in the one God and in Christ as the one Lord was organic

[1] C. N. Moody, *The Mind of the Early Converts*, pp. 105, 106.

to the Church; it might be held more or less firmly and intelligently, but Paul never dreamed of suggesting that, if Christians were so weak that they dropped such a conviction, they might still be Christians. What the weak suffered from was a semi-superstitious dread lest these supernatural powers still infected food which had been sacrificed to them.

7 Some who have hitherto been accustomed to idols eat the food
as food which has been really offered to an idol, and so
8 their weaker conscience is contaminated. Now mere food
will not bring us any nearer to God;
if we abstain we do not lose anything,
and if we eat we do not gain anything.
9 But see that the exercise of your right does not prove any
10 stumbling-block to the weak. Suppose anyone sees you, a
person of enlightened mind, reclining at meat inside an
idol's temple; will that really 'fortify his weak conscience'? Will it not embolden him to violate his scruples
of conscience by eating food that has been offered to
11 idols? He is ruined, this weak man, ruined by your 'enlightened mind,' this brother for whose sake Christ died!
12 By sinning against the brotherhood in this way and wounding their weaker consciences, you are sinning against
13 Christ. Therefore if food is any hindrance to my brother's
welfare, sooner than injure him I will never eat flesh as
long as I live, never!

7 These weaker brothers were not narrow-minded people who insisted upon prohibition as a compulsory rule for all others, desiring to impose their scruples upon the Church. Paul would have rejected such a censorious tyranny (x. 29) as an invasion of Christian liberty, with the same passion as he rejected the similar plea for circumcision (Gal. ii. 4, 5). It was not a case of scrupulous people insisting that others must share their scruples, but of people who were in real danger of being led to violate their conscience by the example and influence of stronger minds. He introduces here the Stoic term **conscience** into the Christian vocabulary of religion, as the faculty of

moral judgement which recognizes responsibility towards a personal God for one's actions. It is **contaminated** (2 Cor. vii. 1) when such weaker natures eat food which had been formally dedicated to an idol, and which they honestly believe ought not to be eaten by a strict Christian. 'What you stronger, enlightened people do with a perfectly good conscience, they are
led to do against their convictions.' Paul's attitude to the 8
whole matter is characteristic. He does not enter into the question of how these **weaker,** over-scrupulous natures are to be educated. He himself does not share their petty prejudices. He is so far on the side of the enlightened. But all such details about **food** are secondary (Rom. xiv. 17). As Jesus had swept aside the Jewish distinctions between 'clean' and 'unclean' **food,** so Paul here brushes aside distinctions between pagan foods (for, in the light of x. 14–xi. 32, it is self-evident that he is not referring to the communion elements, as though it were a matter of indifference whether or not one partook of the sacrament). From one point of view, of course, it does matter what one eats or drinks; he was perfectly alive to that side of practical religion. But since **food** does not affect the standing of any Christian towards God, he argues with the enlightened that in the circumstances it would do them no harm to **abstain** from idol-food, hinting that they had no business to assume they **gained** anything or somehow became superior Christians
by eating it. What will do harm is to **exercise** their **right** 9
without consideration for their weaker fellows. You may not be eating in any spirit of bravado, but naturally as your right. Still, what if you thereby upset the faith of these poor Chris-
tians, who catch sight of you at a social club dinner in the 10
Serapeum, or some other pagan shrine, partaking freely of the food? You may retort, 'It will do the man good; it may shake him out of his silly scruples and **fortify his conscience.'** The word **fortify** is literally 'edify.' A pretty kind of edification, that! Paul's indignant reply is that on the contrary it
proves the ruin of the man, if he feels obliged to follow the 11
lead and commit what is for him a sin. Instead of rising above feeble scruples into a stronger sense of the faith, he acts against them. Which is fatal, for, such as they are, these scruples

represent for him the whole duty that he is conscious of owing to God.

From irony Paul now passes to solemn warning in ‘ this memorable saying,’ which Calvin thought should be taken as a question (‘ Is the weak brother to be ruined ? ’). It is the same plea as in Rom. xiv. 15, but charged with passionate indignation. To think of one Christian’s enlightenment proving the ruin of a **brother** Christian, **for whose sake Christ** had **died** ! To think of a Christian being unwilling to give up a dinner-
12 party or a special dish for the sake of a fellow-believer ! So far from this conduct being any **gain** (verse 8), it is pronounced a sin **against Christ**, as it wounds weaker consciences within **the brotherhood.** Four times over Paul drives the appeal home with the word **brother.** How seriously he regards this conduct of the enlightened, with their indifference to the susceptibilities of others, is plain from the reason as well as from the tone of the remonstrance. Lack of due consideration for fellow-communicants is stamped as irreverence towards the Body of Christ (xi. 27) ; careful devotion to the interests of others is made the supreme spiritual gift in the Community (xiv.). Both principles were startling to some of the independent Corinthians, but not more so than this reminder that damage might follow what they considered to be the exercise of a personal right. Instead of talking about the need of weaker Christians learning better, Paul counter-attacks the enlightened by showing how much they themselves have still to learn about their responsibilities to the Lord and to one another in the fellowship.

The gravity of his argument comes out, incidentally, in the use of two words, **wound** and **injure** (or **hindrance**). **Wounding** the conscience is far more serious than merely hurting a man’s feelings or shocking him ; it is damaging him by making him be unfaithful to what he considers his duty. ‘ If anyone is induced to do what he really believes to be wrong, even although it is not wrong, he wrongs his conscience and is guilty of sin. You inflict such a wound upon his conscience,’ Paul argues, ‘ if you persuade him by your example so to act. The man sins and you too are **sinning against Christ** as you

behave thus inconsiderately, against Christ who is for you in the person of your brother' (see Matt. xxv. 40, 45, Acts xxvi. 14, 15). Paul's profoundly religious ethic makes such social misconduct, like immorality (vi. 15), a sin against the Lord. The principle is the same as in the trenchant words of Jesus about putting a stumbling-block in the path of weaker disciples (Matt. xviii. 6, 7), and Paul's closing thrust is aglow 13
with the same noble passion for it as in 2 Cor. xi. 29 (**whose faith is hurt, and I am not aglow with indignation**?), where **hurt** is the same word as **hindrance** and **injure** here. It is the verb corresponding to the noun rendered **stumbling-block** in i. 23. The Cross is indeed a **stumbling-block**, inherent in Christianity, which no true Christian will seek to minimize or to explain away. But there are stumbling-blocks which are wantonly or carelessly thrown in the way of men by Christians themselves, such as this action of the enlightened over idol-food. The term denotes a moral upset, which strikes at the very standing of a man's faith; it is far more than 'offence' in our modern sense of the term; it means here, as it did on the lips of Jesus, something that makes a man lose his footing. When enlightened Christians exercise their liberty freely, as individuals, in certain circumstances, those who are weakly sensitive to old restrictions and scruples may be led to take the same liberties, yet with a haunting sense of going beyond their convictions, i.e. of doing something which is still a sin for them. It proves the ruin of them, Paul insists, and you enlightened people, with your nonchalance, are really responsible for it; you have no 'right' to put them in such a position of mortal, moral danger.

It is one of the passages which prove that (*a*) Paul was no mere theorist. He had a chivalrous concern for people with practical difficulties; he could appreciate the power of prejudices which he himself did not share in his mission fields. The Jewish horror of idolatry, for example, was now and then accompanied, on the part of those who had come over from animism, by a deep sense of the defiling, soul-destroying influence of dæmons. 'So keenly is this peril still realized' in some quarters, 'that, e.g., in the South India United Church in Travancore, the Indian members of Church Councils would insist on the suspension from Church membership of those who attended the marriage festivals, even, of relatives who were Hindus, because there idolatrous rites would be practised, and so their souls imperilled.'[1] It also (*b*) reveals the apostle as one who, like Bunyan, had a generous regard for the backward and unintelligent members of the Christian community. Even a modern reader, remote from the trouble at Corinth, feels a thrill in the closing sentence, the thrill of overhearing a great soul championing those who are as yet unable to rid themselves of weak, religious scruples (ix. 22).

He has not yet said his last word on idol-food, however. The question has raised, to begin with, a broad principle of behaviour which he now turns to illustrate from his own career. Since his departure from Corinth, the local church had discovered that their apostle was not doing exactly as other and older apostles did. He had declined support from the church. Was this because he was not really sure of his credentials? Besides, they had found out, either from hearsay or from personal observation, that these revered Palestinian authorities were married and actually travelled with their wives on a mission. Why was not Paul like them? Such criticisms were fermenting with suspicion in the minds of those who, for some reason or other, were challenging his authority, perhaps glad of any handle to use as they discussed his teaching and compared it unfavourably with the practices and opinions of colleagues who had put in an appearance at Corinth. His critics may have alleged that his free, liberal views about idol-food were a proof that he was not a real apostle like Peter. But the chief point was one which he had had already to meet (see 1 Thess. ii. 9 f., 2 Thess. iii. 8 f.) and was to meet again (2 Cor. xi. 7–12), his refusal to accept maintenance from the local church during a mission. In view of this, he argues that he was simply foregoing rights (ix.) to which he was entitled.

ix.

1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the work I have accomplished in

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[1] Cave, *The Gospel of St. Paul*, p. 147.

the Lord ? To other people I may be no apostle, but to you 2
I am, for you are the seal set upon my apostleship in the
Lord.

Paul gives a lead. ' In asking you to consider others as you 1
enjoy your Christian freedom, I am doing no more than what
I do myself. This self-imposed limitation of liberty in the
interests of other Christians is my own practice as I carry out
my apostolic mission. **Free** as I am, with all the rights of **an**
apostle, I do not take advantage of my position.' He is meeting
criticism of his authority again (as in iv. 3 f.), and with this in
mind insists upon his apostolic succession. **Have I not seen**
Jesus our Lord (the **Maran** of the primitive Church, xvi. 22) ?
Whether or not he had seen Jesus in Jerusalem (see on 2 Cor.
v. 16), the revelation near Damascus (xv. 8) meant his personal commission, with all the rights and authority of an
apostle. ' You doubt that ? You deny or disparage my 2
position ? Well, look at your own fellowship, which was the
result of that commission, certifying my apostolic function '—
an echo of i. 6, iii. 10 f., iv. 15.

Here is my reply to my inquisitors. Have we no right to eat and 3–4
drink at the expense of the churches ? Have we no right to 5
travel with a Christian wife, like the rest of the apostles,
like the brothers of the Lord, like Cephas himself ? What ! 6
are we the only ones, myself and Barnabas, who are denied
the right of abstaining from work for our living ? Does 7
a soldier provide his own supplies ? Does a man plant a
vineyard without eating its produce ? Does a shepherd get
no drink from the milk of the flock ? Human arguments, 8
you say ? But does not Scripture urge the very same ? It 9
is written in the law of Moses, *You must not muzzle an ox*
when he is treading the grain. **Is God thinking here about**
cattle ? Or is he speaking purely for our sakes ? Assuredly 10
for our sakes. This word was written for us, because the
ploughman needs to plough in hope, and the thresher to
thresh in the hope of getting a share in the crop. If we 11
sowed you the seeds of spiritual good, is it a great matter

12 **if we reap your worldly goods? If others share this right over you, why not we all the more?**

'**We, Barnabas and myself,** have a perfect **right** to support for ourselves and our wives, if we choose, but I have a perfect right to forego personal support, without incurring reproach
5 from any inquisitive critic.' This is the theme of 3–18. The full right claimed, or rather the privilege asserted, is provision for oneself and also for **a Christian wife,** but Paul, who was unmarried, argues it on the former ground alone. 'A sister, a wife' is not a spiritual bride (vii. 36); Luke's allusion to the **wives** of **the** twelve **apostles** (Acts i. 14) implies that some were married as well as Peter and Philip. The casual reference to **the brothers of the Lord** in this connexion is another reminder of how much was going on in the primitive period of which we have little or no information in the New Testament writings. These four brothers joined the Church after the resurrection, but the only one familiar to us is James (xv. 7), and even the
6 record of his conversion is obscure. Paul mentions **Barnabas** as a prominent apostle who, as the Corinthians knew and disliked (true to the Roman scorn for manual labour as degrading), shared his own practice of working for a living.

7 Of the three illustrations from **a soldier** of the legions on active service (as the Greek term implies), a vine-planter, and **a shepherd**—all employed by Jesus in his teaching—the second is an almost unconscious echo of the humane regulation that among those exempt from campaigning in Israel was anyone 'who has planted a vineyard and not yet enjoyed the fruit of it' (Deut. xx. 6). Another word from the Deuteronomic code occurred to Paul, when he hurried on to clinch proofs from nature with a proof from Scripture. 'Oh, you may
8 say, but these are secular, **human arguments**? What Scripture have you for your plea?' Using 'law' as equivalent to
9 **Scripture** (as he does in xiv. 21 and elsewhere), he retorts by quoting the regulation of Deuteronomy (xxv. 4) that no **ox** is to be muzzled **when he is treading the grain.** Here is warrant from the Sacred Book! 'You may object, "But what has this to do with Christian apostles?" Everything! As if

God was thinking about cattle when he laid down this rule **in the law of Moses !** ' The English Version, ' for our sakes, no 10 doubt, this is written,' conveys a wrong impression. Paul has no doubt that the injunction is not to be understood literally, but spiritually. The Greek word for **purely** is the same as **literally,** or absolutely, in verse 10. The Jewish philosopher Philo generally took the same view of such precepts in the Old Testament ; he regarded the minute laws about animal sacrifice, for example, as really intended by God to illustrate human conduct. The Law was designed for rational creatures, not for animals. But, though Philo thought it was beneath God's concern to legislate for commonplace details and external trifles, he was better than his theory when he came to this humane rule for peasants, that as oxen moved round the threshing-floor, trampling **the grain** from the husk, they were to be permitted an occasional bite. ' I like this gentle, gracious law,' he wrote, in his treatise on *The Virtues* (19). Paul appears to have shared the opinion[1] that such an interpretation was unworthy of God's dignity. It is better to recognize this limitation frankly than to argue, with Thomas Aquinas and Calvin, that he merely holds the literal to be less important than the spiritual application. For Paul, the literal sense of the injunction had no significance at all ; it is one drawback of mystical or allegorical interpretations that, in extracting what is supposed to be the higher meaning of a text or incident, they often miss the profound, direct, significance of the literal statement. If we may trust a scholiast who writes on the *Pax* (14) of Aristophanes, when Athenian slaves of old were set to grind corn, they actually had a circular collar put round their necks, to prevent the poor wretches from picking up any grains for food.

The meaning of this word, then, is to show that those who **plough** and **thresh** in the Christian mission, whether in breaking the ground or in preparing **the crop** afterwards, are naturally 11

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[1] A century earlier, Jewish Hellenists at Alexandria had taken this line. The writer of the *Epistle of Aristeas* (144) declares that one must never ' relapse into the abandoned view that when Moses drew up the rules in the Law with such great care, he did it for the sake of mice and weasels and the like.'

entitled to get something material in reward for their **spiritual**
12 exertions. **Worldly** here is the same as **material** in the similar argument of Rom. xv. 27. Surely, Paul adds, with a touch of irony, it is no **great matter,** nothing surprising (the same phrase as in 2 Cor. xi. 15) or extraordinary, to expect this from you! The **we** is emphatic, **we** as well as these recent mission-agents who have been with you. In 2 Cor. xi. 20 he alludes to what he considered to be a grasping case of financial dealing on the part of one of these missioners. And **we** means not only himself as the founder of the local church, their own apostle, but those like Timotheus and Silas who had been associated with him in the first stage of the mission.

Paul's departure (12–18) from the common practice of Christian apostles on a point for which there was an explicit word of Jesus (verse 14), is significant and puzzling. He seems to have had no hesitation in taking the word as permissive, instead of feeling bound to any merely external imitation of what was laid down by the Lord. His plea was that he declined hospitality from his churches in order to prevent scandal. Did some Jews ever object to a Christian teacher taking money for spiritual instruction when no rabbi would? Or did any pagans feel that such a practice was little better than that of wandering sophists, who took fees for popular lectures on morals and religion as well as on literature and history? Even against the latter custom there were some Greek protests. Or did Paul chiefly feel that he ought not to be a burden to his poor churches? In any case he claimed to have a good conscience, denied that this practice was any irregularity which compromised his apostolic authority, as though he were not in apostolic orders because he declined maintenance, and refused to accept money from any church, with the exception of the Philippian community (Phil. iv. 15). To the end he persisted in this (Acts xx. 33–35), quoting in his defence another word of Jesus. But his point always was that he did so in order to prove his own disinterestedness. No one was to have reason to accuse him of making a good thing out of preaching the gospel, or to be repelled from the Faith by any suspicion that Paul's missions were financially profitable.

Still, he is equally careful to insist, other apostles have a perfect right to claim such support, as much right and freedom as he has to deny himself such freedom. It is noticeable that he does not take the ground of some Greeks like Socrates, who argued that if a religious or moral teacher took money, he was not so free to speak to his audience as he might be bound to speak. Nor does he refer to his own precedent as a rabbi, taught to work at a trade in self-support. The reason why he was so sensitive on this particular point is presented from another angle altogether.

The word cited from the gospel tradition (verse 14) belongs to directions of Jesus for his disciples on a mission, which are charged with urgency. No time to be wasted, no side-issues allowed to divert the missioners from the dominant duty of preaching the gospel in view of the immediate End! Paul's absorption in preaching (i. 17, ii. 4, iv. 1, ix. 16) corresponds to this tradition. The motive is the same, to reach as many as possible with the gospel of the Cross and the Return, before it is too late. This makes it all the more remarkable that he felt at liberty to rule his methods differently from the definite direction of Jesus on one point. At the same time the citation of this gospel-word is a significant proof that one of the first cycles of the tradition about Jesus to be preserved by the Churches was not only that of the Passion-story (xi. 23 f.) and the resurrection (xv. 3 f.), but the delegation of spiritual authority to his disciples in the apostolic propaganda of the Kingdom, which, in a real though obscure way, determined the responsible and special functions of the apostles in the primitive mission during the post-resurrection period.

We did not avail ourselves of it, you say? No, we do not mind 12
any privations if we can only avoid putting any obstacle in
the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that as 13
men who perform temple-rites get their food from the
temple, and as attendants at the altar get their share of the
sacrifices, so the Lord's instructions were that those who 14
proclaim the gospel are to get their living by the gospel?
Only, I have not availed myself of any of these rights, and 15

I am not writing to secure any such provision for myself. I would die sooner than let anyone deprive me of this, my
16 **source of pride. What I am proud of is not the mere preaching of the gospel ; that I am constrained to do.**
17 **Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel ! I get a reward if I do it of my own accord, whereas to do it otherwise is**
18 **no more than for a steward to discharge his trust. And my reward ? This, that I can preach the gospel free from charge, that I can refrain from insisting on all my rights as a preacher of the gospel.**

Again he begins with illustrations from common life before
13 clinching his argument with a word from Scripture. After appealing to the familiar religious custom in ethnic and Jewish
14 circles, he mentions directions or authoritative **instructions of the Lord.** The allusion is to a word which is preserved in Luke x. 7 (**the workman deserves his wages**), and which is explicitly quoted in this connexion by a later member of his school (1 Tim. v. 18). This saying of Jesus is decisive, as weighty as any saying from the Torah. In applying it to the present situation he uses the term **gospel** in the double sense
15 of message and mission, as he explains the motive for his own refusal to accept such maintenance. Not even the sneers and misconceptions to which his practice has given rise will deter him from continuing it. He writes so passionately that the grammar breaks down. Literally the Greek runs—' Better for me to **die** than—no one shall make void **my source of pride** ' (which is to work for you without being paid for it).
16 The following sentences throb with one of the daring paradoxes in which he loved to express his mind when he was deeply moved. It turns upon the innate pride which was one of his characteristics. **Proud** as he was of being a Christian who gloried in the crucified Lord, and of being honoured with the vocation of preaching this **gospel,** he took a pride of his own in preaching gratis. **Preaching ?** he exclaims. There is a divine Must behind it. ' Duties,' as Burke once urged, ' are not voluntary. Duty and will are even contradictory terms.' This is the profound principle of the cry, **I am constrained** to

preach the gospel, obliged to do it as a slave of the Lord ; no question of free choice here ! **When the Lord speaks, who can but prophesy ?** Amos and the great prophets of Israel were Paul's predecessors when he refused to think of himself as offering his services to the Lord. 'If I were to preach **of** 17 **my own accord**, upon my own initiative, I would be entitled to **a reward** for my services. But as a matter of fact I am simply discharging my **trust** as **a steward** in God's Household' (iv. 21). The English Version, 'but if against my will,' fails to bring out the antithesis here between two Greek words which Paul is using in order to sharpen his point. The opposite (*akôn*) of 'willingly' or **of my own accord** (*hekôn*) is not easily expressed in English ; I have rendered it **otherwise**, as less misleading or awkward than any literal rendering like 'not spontaneously.' The apostle employs freely, with a touch of daring, the ordinary language about reward for labour, in his very effort to disclaim any thought of **reward** except in the work itself, in being able to do it free of charge. His pay is to do it without pay ; his pride is to spend himself 18 on people without requiring them to spend anything upon himself. This sums up the moving revelation of the real motive for his line of action in not **insisting on** his full **rights as a preacher of the gospel.**

The thought of this preaching, far beyond Corinth, leads him to mention a wider range of self-imposed restrictions on his liberty. In a good sense, he tried to be a slave (vii. 23) to everybody whom he met, going out of his way to conciliate them in favour of his message, foregoing his personal tastes and antipathies in order to reach Jews and pagans alike, instead of being nonchalant and stiff. Not that he ever practised the full obligations of the Torah as interpreted by pharisaism, any more than Jesus had done. Nor, among pagans, was he antinomian in theory or practice (Rom. iii. 8, vi. 1 f.). But he put himself to the trouble of entering, as far as he could, into the position of such people, with the sole purpose of changing that position. It often meant a sacrifice of his pride as well as of his time. It was a struggle to adapt oneself to weaklings, for example. But he protests that he never grudged this, and that he did it in every possible direction (19–22), with unsparing concern for God's cause.

19 **Why,**
free as I am from all, I have made myself the slave of all,
to win over as many as I could.
20 **To Jews I have become like a Jew,**
to win over Jews ;
to those under the Law I have become as one of themselves—
though I am not under the Law myself—
to win over those under the Law ;
21 **to those outside the Law I have become like one of themselves—**
though I am under Christ's law, not outside God's Law—
to win over those outside the Law ;
22 **to the weak I have become as weak myself,**
to win over the weak.
To all men I have become all things,
to save some by all and every means.

The negative side (' lest we should hinder the gospel ' by putting any obstacle in the way of those who had accepted it or were in the way of being won over) now is put more positively. To use one's freedom aright (viii. 13) is to think of how best to serve the religious interests of others, and this, Paul claims, had been ever his own line, in dealing with **Jews** (whether 19 proselytes or not) and pagans. To **win over** is literally ' to gain,' and **save** (as in the similar word of vii. 16 or Rom. xi. 14) 20 is used in its active sense, of an evangelist. So long as no Christian principle was at stake, he identified himself with the Jewish point of view, as when he had Timotheus circumcised or agreed to share a vow at Jerusalem (Acts xvi. 3, xxi. 20 f.), for example ; he entered into the feelings of Jews, considered their scruples, and sought with sympathy to appreciate their 21 attitude. So with pagans born **outside the Law**. ' I make myself " lawless " to them—not, of course, literally " lawless " or an out-law (he explains in passing), for as a Christian I am

not outside God's law, though free from the code of the Torah.' The **law of Christ** or **of God,** as an order of life ruled by his spirit of love, is elsewhere stressed (Gal. vi. 2, Rom. xiii. 8), but not here, though it was indeed in the loving spirit of consideration that Paul claimed to have become like a pagan himself, realizing how they looked at religion from an experience of their own which had no traditions such as the Jew inherited, arguing with them on their own ground, as at Lystra and Athens, and trying to reach them with tact. So also, he adds, 22 with Christians hampered by **weak** scruples—a reference to the local situation (viii. 7–13). He did not expect (see 2 Thess. iii. 2) to be invariably successful, and he did not find it so. Enough if he could **save some** !

At an early period it was evidently thought that Paul could not have contemplated any failure, and **some** was replaced by 'all.' This pious correction must have been current in the second century, for Clement of Alexandria knew the text in this form (Strom. v. 3) ; through the early Latin versions it passed into the Vulgate. Yet Paul could truly call himself **the slave of all,** with an emphasis on **all.** He was no one-sided apostle, confining himself to those with whom he had most in common, and indisposed to sympathize with the uncongenial. The consciousness that he owed the gospel to **all,** whatever their nationality or temperament might be, carried him far beyond the restrictions of pharisaism. There he had been trained to draw the line strictly ; a rabbi would not associate with a gentile in social intercourse. Paul, under the spirit of Christ, had felt the call of a broader sympathy with all sorts and conditions of mankind. It might be, as it was, misjudged. People were apt to declare that they never were sure what Paul was doing ; liberals complained he was too conservative when he mixed with narrower men, and conservatives looked askance when he associated freely with liberal-minded people. Suspicious people probably thought and said that no one knew where Paul was. But he claims to be honest and consistent in his very variations. Zeal sometimes makes a man rigid and unbending, as he presents his message. It is given in a 'take or leave it' spirit, without much regard to the particular circumstances of his audience. At the opposite pole, there is a worldly prudence which induces leaders or propagandists to adapt their principles diplomatically, in view of various susceptibilities, or, in the case of ordinary people, to abate if not to conceal their convictions, suiting their ideas to their company. Paul's high principle of accommodation is as readily caricatured in this way as it is misunderstood by those who consider it the line of least resistance. For him it was a costly, difficult, exacting course. If he tried to take people as he found them, to begin with, it was often a real trial to him. And his dominant aim was not to leave them as he found them. One spring of his power lay in his sheer steadfastness of purpose, and the effect of this was heightened, it was not diluted, by his singular capacity for sympathy with different natures. 'We quote Saint Paul when he talked of making himself all things to all men and of becoming to the Jews a Jew, and as without the Law to the heathen. But then we do so with the view to justifying ourselves for leaving the Jew to remain a Jew, and the heathen to remain a heathen,' as Lord Morley writes in the third chapter of his book on *Compromise*. 'There is, as anybody can see, a whole world of difference between the reserve of sagacious apostleship, on the one hand, dealing tenderly with scruple and fearfulness and fine sensibility of conscience, and the reserve of intellectual cowardice on the other hand, dealing hypocritically with narrow minds in the supposed interests of social peace and quietness.' Wherever people were, in any country of the mind, Paul made his way to them with the single desire of drawing them over the line to his Lord and theirs.

'If this spirit of voluntary self-denial is needed for my work of preaching, it is also needed for my participation in the saving gospel that I thus seek to commend to others. To say, "I've a right to this or that," is not the way to live the Christian life. It will injure other people. More than that, it will injure the man himself.' This underlying thought of the next passage (23–27) broadens out into a word upon the asceticism which lies at the heart of personal religion, asceticism in the sense of a serious and sustained discipline for mind and body in order to resist the imperious cravings of the lower self, as well as to offer effective devotion to the cause of God. Paul here expresses, for the first time, the essence of the ascetic principle, viz. the wisdom of being prepared to sacrifice the good for the sake of the better. He puts it in terms of local sport at Corinth, but it is simply a call to rise, at all costs, above what Aristotle had once described as the barbarian ideal of living as one likes.

And I do it all for the sake of the gospel, to secure my own share 23
in it. Do you not know that in a race, though all run, only 24
one man gains the prize ? Run so as to win the prize.
Every athlete practises self-restraint all round ; but while 25
they do it to win a fading wreath, we do it for an unfading.
Well, I run without swerving ; I do not plant my blows 26
upon the empty air—no, I maul and master my body, lest, 27
after preaching to other people, I am disqualified myself.

23 'I do all that I have been describing, I undergo privations and self-imposed limitations of my freedom, to make the gospel profitable not simply to other people but to myself.' It is the same humble confession as he made later to the Philippians—'not as though I have already attained.' But the special point here is that, whatever form it may take, the Christian calling involves a strict self-discipline to the very end. For himself, it must be remembered, what we call personal religion was the same thing as apostolic vocation ; he always regarded his religious life under the Lord as from the first a summons to service. 'It pleased God, who called me by his grace, to reveal his Son to me that I might preach him.' This is brought out in the stories of the experience at Damascus, as it is implied later in this very letter, when he divides his life into two parts, one in which he persecuted the Church, the other in which he served it. Once we set aside our modern distinction between personal salvation and the service of the gospel, the connexion of what follows with what he has just been saying becomes natural, although, as usual, he has several things in mind as he continues. The general truth is that to

secure a **share in the gospel,** it is not enough to please oneself in the Church, to assert one's freedom, or to be easy-going. His very versatility might have been suspected of this motive. Perhaps it was. Did he adapt himself to any circle in which he happened to find himself, simply to make things smooth and easy for himself? No, he retorts, it costs me something, as a real interest in the gospel will cost you too.

24 In the arena of the Christian life, no pains must be spared to win **the prize** and attain the supreme end. The allusion to the games held in the marble stadium on the Isthmus was particularly apt, for they were both an athletic festival and a religious gathering. Competitors came from far and wide, women as well as men; only three or four years before Paul reached Corinth, two women had distinguished themselves by winning prizes, as the local inscriptions record with pride. No chance of success there, unless one was prepared to do without comfort and ease beforehand! The coveted prizes, such as they were, could never be won except by those who were ready to spend
25 more than odd moments in training. Alike for a foot-race and for a boxing contest one had to concentrate all one's powers, and to undergo a severe preliminary training for months. No one could hope to gain the prize in a foot-race by strolling.
26 No one could win if he ran casually or 'uncertainly,' **swerving** from the course as he took his eye off the goal. What boxer won if he did not **plant** his **blows** accurately, instead of hitting out wildly in **the air**? Besides, a combatant had to practise thorough **self-restraint** beforehand, confining himself to spare, strict diet, and forgoing the ordinary pleasures of life, in order to be in good physical form. And all for **a fading wreath** of pine or ivy leaves! 'The question still recurs'—it is Pater, in his book on *Plato and Platonism,* reflecting like a hedonist upon the possible motives for the exacting discipline of character to which the Spartans subjected themselves—'To what purpose? Why, with no prospect of Israel's reward, are you so scrupulous, minute, self-taxing as he? . . . In fact the surprise of St. Paul, as a practical man, at the slightness of the reward for which a Greek spent himself, natural as it is about all pagan perfection, is especially applicable about these

Lacedæmonians, who had indeed actually invented that so "corruptible" and essentially worthless parsley crown in place of the more tangible prizes of an earlier age. Strange people! Where precisely may be the spring of action in you, who are so severe to yourselves?' But Paul was not contrasting 'Israel's reward' with any Greek prize awarded for a victory won by strict training and sustained physical effort; it was the reward of the resolute discipline practised by a Christian who did not shrink from the punishing privations involved in a thoroughgoing pursuit of the spiritual vocation (vii. 29 f.). What surprised and alarmed him was that so many Christians at Corinth still failed to realize the exacting demands of **devotion to the Lord** with the intensity which he himself felt. It may be that **I maul and master my own body** 27 (not, like the boxer, my opponent's) carries on the pugilistic metaphor by a rather forced turn. In any case he is referring not simply to the bodily strain which he gladly accepted in the service of the Lord—this he had already mentioned in iv. 11 f., and he recurs to it in 2 Cor. iv. 7 f.—but to discipline voluntarily inflicted upon himself (as in Rom. viii. 13), probably by fasting and other physical privations; even though by this time he was well over fifty, he was still ready for any such discipline in order to make the body the servant of the spirit.

The metaphor, or simile, of the ascetic as an athlete was common in moral counsels of the age. Philo had already employed it for religious purposes. When ethical writers like Seneca and Epictetus urge a discipline of self-restraint for soul and body, they constantly refer to the severe training of racers and pugilists, even contrasting the outward reward of the athlete with the inward gain of the serious soul. What is specially characteristic in Paul's description is the allusion at the close to passions of the **body** which require to be mastered in the interests of his eternal welfare. To be **disqualified** is the opposite of securing one's **share** in the final salvation. It is not certain that he has still the athletic contest in mind, although Paul's illustrations from athletics, as well as from architecture (iii. 12 f.) and law (Rom. vii. 1 f.), sometimes press the lesson at the expense of lucidity and accuracy in the metaphor. The telling sentence here simply echoes the idea that, as he afterwards told the Philippians, he was strenuously pressing on 'if by any means he might attain,' and that the Lord was the final judge of his efforts. He had ever, he confesses, the fear that his work might be better than his character. The son of Sirach had already described a teacher of the Law who 'is shrewd and instructs many, but is no good to his own soul' (xxxvii. 19). Paul must have known this word of his Greek Bible; indeed 'who instructs' is the very term **tutor** which he uses of the competent Jew in Rom. ii. 20. But he did not require this or any similar saying to suggest the admission here, that one might give admirable counsel to other people and fail by not following it himself. He realized that, after preaching self-restraint and faith to others, in his vocation, he might be rejected for failing to be hard upon himself. In this humble, candid utterance, so remarkable after the warm claims of what precedes, he allows the Corinthians to overhear him really **preaching to himself** upon the risk of endangering his personal salvation by any slackness in his mission-work. 'None of us dare presume upon his past or upon his privileges; none dare take liberties with himself. God knows I dare not, and I do not.'

Grammatically the word rendered **disqualified** might mean no more than 'discredited' or 'reproved' (so the Genevan version). But even in Paul's later use of the term (2 Cor. xiii. 5–8) it conveys a more serious idea, and this is borne out by the following warning (x. 1–11): 'I may fail to satisfy the Lord; so may we all, unless we are strict.' As usual, the illustration from contemporary life in the world (ix. 24 f.) is succeeded by one from Scripture, the point of which is, 'We must not be careless about ourselves, even though we belong to God and enjoy sacramental privileges.' The Bible story is at one point more apt than the athletic allusion. In the sports, one gains at the expense of others, but not so in the Christian effort, where there is nothing competitive. Thus 'in a race all run, but one receiveth the prize' is less apposite than 'our fathers all' had their privileges, 'but with most of them God was not well pleased.' The latter illustration from Israel with its desert sacraments broadens the range of the **disqualified.**

X.

For I would have you know this, my brothers, that while our 1
fathers all lived under the cloud, all crossed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses by the cloud and by the 2
sea, all ate the same supernatural food, and all drank the 3–4
same supernatural drink (drinking from the supernatural Rock which accompanied them—and that Rock was Christ), still with most of them God was displeased ; *they* 5
were laid low in the desert.

Though Paul as usual (7, xiv. 21) avoids 'People' as a direct term for the Church, perhaps on account of its nationalistic associations, the story of the Old Testament is the early story 1
of God's People—that is, of the Christian Church or the **saints** (i. 2). Contemporary rabbis sometimes debated whether the fathers were baptized before Sinai. Paul has no doubt on this point. **Our fathers** of old had their sacraments of baptism and spiritual food, but even that did not prevent them from relapsing into pagan idolatry and vice. Sacraments are no safeguard for a careless life which takes liberties with itself. Such is the moral read from this story, the only one which Paul tells in this epistle. In Hebrews (iii. 5 f.), the writer preaches on the ninety-fifth psalm as a warning against the risk of forfeiting spiritual privileges by practical disobedience to God ; but that psalm is based upon the story of Israel, and Paul prefers to go back directly to the historical narrative. As Christians have been baptized into Christ, so **our fathers were baptized** 2
into loyalty to **Moses,** their divinely appointed leader and mediator, as they passed **through** the water of the Red **Sea,** with the sheltering **cloud** overhead. Then, like Christians at 3
their holy supper, **our fathers** had manna as their **supernatural food,** and drank from the **supernatural Rock.** The Greek adjec- 4
tive literally is 'spiritual,' but this is equivalent to 'charged with Spirit or divine potency' ; **supernatural** brings out the real force of the term. It was **the same** provision of God for them all, and it was also continuous. Indeed, to bring out the

parallel between it and the Christian feast of communion at the latter point of the drink, Paul reverts to a rabbinic midrash on the story of Moses striking the rock till water gushed out. Not an isolated gift, the midrash taught, but as lasting as the manna ; this ' well of water ' **accompanied** or ' followed them,' as one form of the tradition put it, while another quaintly explained that ' the well which was with Israel in the wilderness was like a rock, travelling with them . . . it made mighty streams.' The first form of the legend appears in the second-century Targum of Onkelos, the second in the Mishna tractate, *Tosefta Sukka* (iii. 11, 12). The younger Jewish contemporary of Paul who wrote a story-book of *Biblical Antiquities*, full of dread lest Jews should associate with gentiles and lapse into idolatry, also explains Num. xxi. 16 f. by saying that ' from the time the well was given ' to Israel, it followed them. This tradition, like that employed in Gal. iv. 29, was current in Paul's day, though it only appears in written form afterwards. But there is no indication that Jewish piety attached any messianic significance to the Rock. Philo had indeed interpreted Deut. viii. 15 (' who brought thee water out of the rock of flint ') as a reference to God's Wisdom or Logos, ' of which souls that love God receive and drink.' For Paul, however, **the supernatural Rock** was nothing but **Christ,** who had mysteriously refreshed the fathers long ago, as to-day he called God's People to eat and drink (x. 16, xi. 24 f.). The apostle does no more than allude to Christ's pre-existence (viii. 6) in
5 the bygoing ; his aim is to recall the tragic abuse of such sacramental grace by the majority of **our fathers in the desert.** Would nothing sober these light-hearted Corinthians ? Let them remember what happened. **All** our fathers enjoyed God's favour and Christ's refreshing presence. Five times over this **all** is echoed. Still **most of them displeased** him ; though he satisfied their daily needs, they did not satisfy his requirements, and therefore he **laid them low in the desert,** as the tale of Numbers (xiv. 16) had recorded. Then, as now (xi. 30), the penalty of such flagrant sin was suffering and death.

6 **Now this took place as a warning for us, to keep us from** ***craving***

for evil as *they craved*. You must not be idolaters, like some 7
of them ; as it is written,

the people sat down to eat and drink,
and they rose up to make sport.

Nor must we commit immorality, as some of them did— 8
and in a single day twenty-three thousand of them fell.
Nor must we presume upon the Lord as some of them did— 9
only to be destroyed by serpents. And you must not mur- 10
mur, as some of them did—only to be destroyed by the
Destroying angel.

The story is not typical, in the technical sense of the term 6
(*tupoi*), but a **warning** example against sinful **cravings,** which
was the word of his Greek Bible for Israelites ' lusting ' for the
food of Egypt, discontented with God's simple provision for
them in their redeemed life (Num. xi. 4, 34). The next inci- 7
dent is the golden calf worship, as described in the book of
Exodus. Of all the seventeen reminiscences of the Old Testament in the epistle, this (with those in verse 26 and xv. 32) is alone quoted exactly as in the Greek text (Exod. xxxii. 6). **Sport,** as in the traditional interpretation of the Old Testament, refers to the licentious orgies of dancing which followed the
feast, and led, as at a later stage, to **immorality.** He has in 8
mind the story of the Israelites and Moabite women, recorded in Num. xxv. 1–9, which concludes by noting the death of twenty-four thousand offenders. For some reason, probably by a mere slip of memory, Paul makes them **twenty-three thousand.** Rabbinic tradition not only held that **sat down** (in Scripture) always meant moral degradation, but often identified **sport** in the Old Testament with idolatry ; Paul not only follows this line, but, as usual, associates idolatry with **immorality** (vi. 9 **immoral, idolaters**). ' The beginning of
immorality is to devise idols ' (Wisd. of Sol. xiv. 16). In Num. 9
xiv. 22, Israel is reproached for having ' tempted the Lord ten times '—that is, over and over again. The rabbis took it literally and reckoned as one black item of the list the discontented murmuring of Israel recorded in Num. xxi. 1–6, where the offenders are stung to death by **serpents.** Paul alludes to the

description of this in Ps. lxxviii. 18 f., where it is said that they provoked God as they **presumed upon** the Lord by daring to doubt if he could or would provide for them in their hunger. Let him show what he can do! This is the sin of ungrateful suspicion which tries the Lord's patience, openly challenging
10 his care by doubts of his providence. It is close to the sin of murmuring, which is twice noticed in the book of Numbers (xiv. 36 f. and xvi. 11–49), though Paul is thinking specially of the grumbling, insubordinate spirit which tempted some of the Corinthians to criticize and challenge their own spiritual authorities, as Korah had stirred murmuring against the leaders of his own day. The murmuring is mainly murmuring against the Lord in the person of his appointed servants. None of the Old Testament tales mentions **the Destroying angel,** who may be an equivalent here for Satan, in view of the wording in v. 5 (**to Satan for the destruction of the flesh**). It is one of the touches due to Paul's recollection of the stories as told in the Wisdom of Solomon (xviii. 20 f.), although the apostle naturally substitutes **the Lord** Christ for the divine Wisdom.

The closing words, by way of summary (11–13), are prompted by deep pastoral concern. He knew that some were likely to feel conscious of being tempted (by God, rather than to feel guilty of tempting God (verse 9), and therefore adds a general counsel upon the Christian attitude toward temptation, passing from admonition to encouragement. Never let them imagine that God was not doing justice to their needs or that he was imposing too severe an ordeal upon their loyalty.

11 It all happened to them by way of warning for others, and it was written down for the purpose of instructing us whose lot
12 has been cast in the closing hours of the world. So let anyone who thinks he stands secure, take care in case he
13 falls. No temptation has waylaid you that is beyond man's power; trust God, he will never let you be tempted beyond what you can stand, but, when temptation comes, he will provide the way out of it, so that you can bear up under it.

Such a record of old, unhappy, far-off things as the apostle 11
has so pungently summed up, is meant **for us,** no less than the
more encouraging words of the Bible (Rom. xv. 4), in these
closing scenes of Time's drama (vii. 31), when the finale of the
Ages is upon **us,** the real Israel. Sin is as near us as then, and
so is God. No one can risk contamination with pagan rites 12
to-day, imagining that he is safe because he has a **standing in
the faith** (2 Cor. i. 24) and belongs to God's own people ; particularly, he must not dream of supplementing or enjoying the
Christian communion with any similar feast of a pagan cult
(verse 21), as our fathers did. On the other hand, if **temptation** 13
besets us in life, God is beside us. Anyone who endeavours to be faithful will find that 'God is faithful,' true to his promise and purpose to bring the loyal safely through temptation to the very end (i. 9). To **provide the way out of** temptation is not to free life from it, so that one may escape the danger, nor even to reveal to the hard-pressed that there will be **a way out** some day, so that meantime it may be borne ; though the metaphor seems to suggest this, it really means that God provides the loyal with power to **bear up** under the shock and strain of temptation. Thus their feet are cleared. 'Distrust your own unaided powers ; **trust God,** without whom (that is, if you were without a tie to him) you would never be **waylaid** by temptation at all, and with whom you will find yourselves able to endure it.' An early gloss on the Lord's Prayer read, 'Lead us not into temptation which we cannot bear.' Paul assures the church that temptation is never beyond man's power of endurance ; 'never murmur that God is allowing you to be unduly tried, or that only an angelic spirit could stand what you have to stand. The saving power of endurance comes to those who bravely **trust** their loyal **God.'** It is an echo of the distinctive emphasis in Christianity, inherited from the Hebrew religion, that God is to be trusted. Human faithfulness rests upon his faithfulness. Such personal confidence in God was not characteristic of Stoicism, and it was strangely defective in the mystery cults; they had the word, but not the truth of faith as the core of living fellowship with God.

Paul now clinches the whole argument by referring (in 14–22) to a peril in the Corinthian situation which had been in his mind ever since he began to dictate x. 1 f.

14 **Shun idolatry, then, my beloved. I am speaking to sensible**
15 **people ; weigh my words for yourselves.**
16 **The cup of blessing which we bless,**
is that not participating in the blood of Christ ?
The bread we break,
is that not participating in the body of Christ ?
17 **(for, many as we are, we are one Bread, one Body, since we**
18 **all partake of the one Bread). Look at the rites of Israel.**
Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar ?
19 **Do I imply, you ask, that ' food offered to an idol has any**
20 **meaning, or that an idol itself means anything ' ? No,**
what I imply is that anything pagans offer in sacrifice is
sacrificed to dæmons, not to God. **And I do not want you**
21 **to participate in dæmons ! You cannot drink the cup of**
the Lord and also the cup of dæmons ; you cannot partake
of the table of the Lord and also of the table of dæmons.
22 *What ! do we intend to rouse the Lord's jealousy ?* **Are**
we stronger than he is ?

14 **Shun** (as in vi. 18) **idolatry,** the beginning of all badness (x. 7), now as of old. Idolatry in English, as in Greek (*eidôlolatria*), is literally the worship (*latry*) of an idol. As a Jew was loyal, his worship of the one God determined the whole of his life, distinguishing him from men of other nations. For Christians, in their own way, **idolatry** in any shape or form also covered the worship or practical recognition of any deity except the Lord (viii. 6) ; it was fatal to their religion. For them, as for Jews, idolatry was one of the three deadly sins, as they read their Bible. Or it ought to be. Paul appeals to
15 their intelligence. Elsewhere **sensible** or ' wise ' is used sarcastically (as in 2 Cor. xi. 19, **you who know so much**), but it is serious here. ' Any intelligent man knows that those who take part in a sacrificial feast participate in the deity for whom
16 or with whom they eat and drink. Our own feast means **participating in Christ,** and that excludes any other.' So much is

clear. What is not so clear is the meaning attached to participation. Participation in Christ (i. 9) primarily denoted enjoying a share, but it had also the corporate sense of sharing with others in a fellowship. Anyone familiar with Greek religious groups knew that those who partook of a sacrificial feast were bound together by a tie of special sanctity and force. So near is this truth of corporate life in worship to Paul's mind that he instantly adds one of his pregnant asides. It is a comment on 17
the bread, since that suggested common unity even more aptly than the cup in this connexion, although it is true that the Jewish **cup of blessing** might be handed round the gathering like a loving-cup. **Many as we are, we are one Bread, one Body,** inasmuch as **we all partake of the one Bread.** It is as though he declared, our communion is indeed **participating in the** crucified **body of Christ** (so Rom. vii. 4), broken for our sakes in sacrifice, but there is a mystical, unbroken Body in which we have communion with him and with one another. As Calvin puts it, ' We must first be incorporated into Christ (as it were), that we may be united to one another.' Such is Paul's wonderful conception of the Church as the Body of Christ, to which he returns later on (xi. 29, xii. 12 f.). In **participating,** Christians **all** partake and share his life, the life that creates and sustains the fellowship as it reaches us through his sacrifice. To Paul this is so vital that, even although it does not belong to his immediate argument, he finds a place for it in this parenthesis.

Resuming the thesis, he illustrates his principle from two 18
familiar aspects of worship in the world, like, and yet so unlike, the Christian communion. First, from the outward expression of Israel's religion. ' Israel after the flesh ' amounts here to **the rites of Israel.** Strictly speaking, for his purpose there was little relevant in Israel's worship ; though priests and Levites often did eat part of what had been sacrificed on the altar of the temple, this meal had no special significance ; certainly it did not bring them into any direct fellowship with God, any more than even the passover was supposed to do. As it happens, the prophet Malachi did call the altar twice **the table** 21
of the Lord, probably referring to the table on which loaves of

the Presence-bread were placed, to be taken away every week and eaten by the priests and Levites. But Paul is not alluding to this, or to similar customs, though he appealed to them in another connexion (ix. 13); an **altar** for sacrifice to the gods, in the ancient world, could readily be called a **table** of communion between deities and their worshippers, and he is thinking rather of the paschal celebrations, which characterized Israel's tie to their God, when a covenant sacrifice was followed by a
18 covenant meal. Whether **altar** refers to the original sacrifice of food upon the altar, or (by a religious circumlocution) to the god of the altar, is of little moment. The point is, that such an act of eating food which was connected with an altar was not a thing by itself; it stamped worshippers, it involved a connexion between them and the deity of the altar, in this case Israel's Lord.

19 So with pagan festivals; to participate in them is not to join a social group or go through some ceremony for what is, from the religious standpoint, irrelevant. 'True, idol-**food** and idols mean nothing to us Christians, as I've told you already (viii. 7 f.). But behind and through such rites, sacrificial in
20 their own way, homage is offered to **dæmons**; as you eat, you are mixed up with what is a recognition of supernatural powers opposed to God.' He cites sharply some words from Deuteronomy, where Israel's tampering with idolatry, to which he had just been referring, is called sacrificing **to dæmons, not to God** (xxxii. 17). Indeed the Greek might represent the scorn of the Hebrew idiom, 'to a no-god,' a mere nonentity. The stern warning, for the lax or the liberals at Corinth, is edged with another phrase from the same Scripture (Deut. xxxii. 21), where the divine judgement is,

> 'they roused me to **jealousy** over a no-god,
> they provoked me with their idols.'

22 Do the liberals at Corinth **intend to rouse** God's **jealousy** as their fathers once did? Are these broad-minded, easy-going Christians so strong in faith (as they maintain) that they can take liberties with the Lord himself, as though they were able

to risk his anger with impunity, or to assume that he will never resent their harmless freedom?

Up to this point the apostle has been warning them that sacramental privileges were no guarantee in themselves against moral relapses (x. 1–13). The tragic failures of ancient Israel had been due to the fact that, either under the strain of life or owing to the fascinations of paganism, the people had been tempted to think that the Lord, with whom they were in fellowship, was not enough; he had either to be replaced or supplemented. In the present paragraph Paul continues this warning against the divided heart. 'The Lord of our fellowship must have our unshared allegiance; he is all we require for communion with the living God. To act as if we thought otherwise is to have no heart for him,' as the cry rings out at the very end of this letter (xvi. 22).

The plea for wholehearted devotion is the more telling, since it is devotion to One who has given his life in suffering and sacrifice in order to bring Christians into full fellowship with God. Paul puts forward the connexion of the sacraments, especially of communion, with sacrifice, which he had not done in x. 1–13—which, indeed, he could not do, since Hebrew henotheism, like the later Jewish monotheism, had no place for self-sacrifice in the divine nature. He is not lecturing on comparative religion, however, as he insists that sacrifice means communion. His argument is not that the Christian eucharist, or communion service, is a truer expression of the widespread pagan desire for fellowship with God on the basis of some sacrifice, but that Christians must regard it as the one means for such fellowship. When Corinthian Christians urged, perhaps in all good faith, that they were not compromising their tie to Christ, or that, after all, the religious banquets which they still frequented and enjoyed were not really sacrificial to them, Paul promptly retorts that they were; they did represent participation in the Zeus or Æsculapius or Serapis to whom the company poured libations, drinking as well as eating in honour and in presence of such deities. '**You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and also the cup of dæmons,** without incurring the deadly guilt of idolatry.' You cannot serve God and mammon, Jesus had once said. So Paul here insists on the Christian devotion as exclusive. ' You may think you are able to combine the two, but to participate in dæmons is an outrage to your Lord and God, which cannot be committed with impunity.' It is a solemn warning against allowing the right or power of freedom, on which they prided themselves, to place them in a position in which this privilege really defied the exclusive right of God to their allegiance.

In view of what follows (xi. 20–32), it is important to notice that Paul does not oppose **the table of the Lord** to an **altar** ; it is contrasted with **the table of dæmons,** which was an altar, because the one as well as the other meant participation in a divine life through sacrifice ; each was a **supper** or evening meal, based upon some kind of offering. The vital difference between **the Lord's table** and **the table of dæmons** lay in the character of the offering, not in any distinction between non-sacrificial communion and sacrificial. To a certain extent this was equally true of Israel's sacrifices, but no Christian dreamed of attending a Jewish passover still ; the apostle is primarily concerned with the sacral festivals of Greek religion at Corinth, which insidiously appealed, for certain reasons, to some members of the local church.

16 At such festivities cups of wine were drunk, after a few drops had been poured out in honour of the deity ; these libations were so distinctive a feature of ritual that Paul speaks of **the cup** first in the ceremony, though, as it happens, **cup of blessing** was a term for the cup in Jewish ritual. The libation was often more significant than even the eating of some meat. There is not sufficient evidence that in such sacramental meals of a cult at this period, in Corinth or elsewhere, the votaries of a deity believed they were partaking of the divine object of their adoration by eating him. The contact came through partaking food which was supposed to be shared with him as host, or consecrated to him in a preliminary act of sacrifice. Thus at Sicyon, eighteen miles west of Corinth, the worshippers of Hercules, ' after slaying a lamb and burning the thighs, offer part of the flesh as of a sacrificial victim,' in honour of their chosen hero, ' to this very day,' the Greek traveller Pausanias

reports (ii. 10), over a hundred years after Paul's mission. In such ways the votaries, by drinking from **the cup of dæmons** and eating food formally laid on their **table,** believed they were guests of a god, in union and communion with him, at the subsequent banquet; they became, as the phrase went, *koinonoi* (a noun corresponding to the verb rendered here by **participate in**), or participants of him in the cult-meal, thus securing supernatural favours of protection and immortality.

Logically, no doubt, it would seem that if any such **idol** or 19 dæmon was really non-existent, it need not be dreaded. But Jews always held both views, that idols were simply manufactured by human hands and that they were employed by real dæmons or evil spirits to seduce the faithful from allegiance to the Lord. Sometimes these contradictory views were presented side by side; sometimes rabbis would attempt to explain the apparent ambiguity. So Paul can repeat, on the one hand, that, for an intelligent Christian, pagan idols or dæmons do not exist, or (as we might say) do not count, and, on the other hand, he can protest that as actual, malign beings of the supernatural order they do exercise an influence (verses 16 f.) on anyone who participates in their sacrificial worship, even though the man may protest, perhaps, that he has no belief in this particular method of seeking communion through sacrifice. It is a conception similar to that which underlies his references to the Elements (Gal. iv. 9, Col. ii. 8). He is thinking as a Jew who believed not so much in monotheism as in what was henotheism. The one God is superior to all other beings of the celestial realm, and yet the latter exist; good angels and spirits are media of his supreme power, while the evil (ii. 8) are already maimed and in the end are to be disarmed, though at present they may, and do, exert an evil influence over any of the Lord's loyalists who are not careful to avoid their sway, particularly when that sway operates through their rites of sacrificial worship.

Now it is surely impossible to conceive that, unless the apostle was really in two minds on the matter, he was thinking of such sacral feasts when he wrote about an enlightened Christian **reclining at meat inside an idol's temple** (viii. 10).

There he sees nothing intrinsically wrong ; any harm done is not to the man himself, but to some over-scrupulous fellow-Christian. Does he, then, suddenly revoke this permission in x. 14–22, restricting any consumption of idol-food to private dinner-parties (23 f.), with a similar demand for consideration to be shown to any weaker Christian who chanced to be a fellow-guest ? This would be tenable were it not for the abrupt alteration of tone in 23–26, which is a natural introduction to 27 f., but not so natural as a sequel to 14–22 ; the point of 23, 24 is to justify not merely 25, 26, but the behaviour indicated in 27 f., whereas the prohibition of idol-food as utterly wrong (in 14–22) lies on a very different plane from that on which its consumption is pronounced to be not a good example for other people in certain circumstances. There would be no point in telling a Christian who ate and drank at some utterly inconsistent **table of dæmons,** that his behaviour was not edifying !

The juxtaposition of these sections is one of the reasons which have led to theories about the literary structure of the epistle (see above, p. xxiv.). Has something been left out, or has there been a misplacement of the material ? May not 14–22 (with 1–13) have belonged to the rigorous ‘ first ’ letter, it has been suggested ? Is not Paul, in viii. 7 f., really modifying his original ruling as laid down in x. 1–22 ? At first sight, this hypothesis seems attractive. Yet, on the other hand, if he did not modify his ruling against mixed marriages (2 Cor. vi. 14 f. and 1 Cor. vii. 39), is it likely that he would have tolerated any Christian attending regular sacral feasts at Corinth ? Those who find this almost incredible have to explain his apparent shift in passing from x. 1–13, 14–22 to 23–26, 27 f., and this may be done by taking the facts of the actual situation into account. A pagan might invite his friends to dinner. It might be held in some temple ; in which case the meat of the slain animal, i.e. a small part of it, often some uneatable portion like the hair, was first consecrated to the god who was formally supposed to preside at the banquet, which was called ‘ a table ’ of Serapis or Isis or Æsculapius, as the case might be. Such would be the situation contemplated in viii. 7 f. Should the dinner be given at home, the host would have the carcass brought back from the temple, or he might purchase similar food in the butcher's shop, which commonly adjoined a temple. In neither case was there any regular sacral feast such as is implied in 14–22. A dish might be idol-food, but Paul did not ban that, in the circumstances. The only difference between viii. 7 f. and x. 23 f. would be that the former passage perhaps includes the annual dinners of social or business clubs, whereas x. 23 f. applies to private entertainments, even when the latter were held in a club-room attached to a shrine, or, as we know they were, in some temple as a sort of restaurant.

The sacral feasts of 14–22 were real religious celebrations, however, deliberate acts of worship. If it sounds surprising that even ' enlightened ' Christians were occasionally tempted to join such festivities, we can only suppose that they thought themselves fairly safe to attend civic religious ceremonies at which municipal officials, for example, were bound to be present. It is even possible that some, who had once belonged to a favourite cult, retained their membership for the sake of old associations. One could belong to any number of cults in the religious world of Greece, and the Christian communion might be regarded as supreme, without being exclusive. To frequent festivals of one of the **many lords** would do no harm (how could it, for baptized Christians ?), and it might do them some good ! Besides, as compared with the bare, unadorned rite of the eucharist, celebrated in some unconsecrated room, in a hole-and-corner fashion, the prestige and thrilling ritual of these cult-celebrations probably exercised a subtle fascination over many Christians as yet. Apparently as late as the end of the fifth century, Christians at Carthage were so attached to the local cult of Tanit, the Heavenly Queen, that they were accustomed to attend her worship either before or after they went to church. Salvian (in his *De Gubernatione Dei*, viii. 2. 9–13) indignantly cites against such a practice the very words of Paul in 1 Cor. x. 21. There may be an allusion to such a dangerous practice of practical syncretism in Hebrews (x. 25). It was certainly at the back of Paul's mind when he wrote x. 1–13. There were public or semi-public sacred feasts at Corinth, so attractive to members of the Church, so difficult to give up, so full of pleasant associations, that he had to denounce them as a menace to the Faith. Some local Church-people did not think so. Dæmons still were to them perhaps, as to pious Greeks in that animistic age, secondary gods, guardian angels, or patron saints, who somehow mediated contact with the supernatural. Also the religion of such cults was so bound up with civic and social life that many Christians hardly knew where they needed to draw the line; some hesitated, for various reasons, to make the break too sharp, and were disposed to regard participation in a cult as innocuous, especially if they had not come into the Church through Judaism. Hence Paul drives home the remonstrance of 14–22 to their conscience, as a climax to the warning against idolatry (1–13). Then there is a pause. When he resumes, what he had dictated since viii. 1, is read over to him, and in 23 f. he reverts to the issue from which he had advanced in the special application of ix. 1 f.

23 'All things are lawful'?
Yes, but not all are good for us.
'All things are lawful'?
Yes, but not all are edifying.
24 Each of us must consult his neighbour's interests, not his
25 own. Eat any food that has been sold in the market,
instead of letting scruples of conscience induce you to ask
26 questions about it; *the earth and all its contents belong to*
the Lord.
27 When an unbeliever invites you to dinner and you agree to go,
eat whatever is put before you, instead of letting scruples
28 of conscience induce you to ask questions about it. But
if someone tells you, 'This was sacrificial meat,' then do
not eat it; you must consider the man who told you, and
29 also take conscience into account—his conscience, I mean,
not your own; for why should one's own freedom be
30 called in question by someone else's conscience? If one
partakes of food after saying a blessing over it, why should
one be denounced for eating what one has given thanks to

God for? So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, 31
let it all be done for the glory of God. Put no stumbling- 32
block in the way of Jews or Greeks or the church of God.
Such is my own rule, to satisfy all men in all points, aiming 33
not at my own advantage but at the advantage of the
greater number—at their salvation. xi.
Copy me, as I copy Christ. I commend you for always bearing 1–2
me in mind and for maintaining the traditions I passed on
to you.

He has something more to say about eating idol-food (viii. 7 f.). In certain circumstances it may not be **good for** 23 Christians to insist upon this right of theirs. To **consult one's own interests** or 'seek his own' is the same as to be **selfish** in 24 xiii. 5, and here it is the opposite of **edifying.** Paul states the right of a Christian to eat such food more explicitly than he had done before. The Christian religion has moved into a larger freedom which is not to be trammelled by provincial Jewish tabus about food; **any food sold in the market** may be 25 freely eaten by a Christian who knows what his religion means. and he ought not to dream of asking nervous **questions** about meat as he buys it or partakes of it. The Greek word for **market** is a transliteration of the Roman term *macellus* or *macellum*, which denoted a provision stall or meat-market. Fragments of a Corinthian *macellum* have been recently dug up, which may have been in existence in Paul's day. Such a store offered for sale carcasses from an adjoining temple, which had been formally consecrated to a deity of the cults; as this meat was not only good but cheap, it was frequently bought even by poor folk. Well, any food thus and there exposed for sale, Paul affirms, can be eaten by a Christian who realizes that his God made **all** food, animal and vegetable, for human use. We have Scripture for it. **The earth and all its** 26 **contents belong to the Lord.** Possibly these opening words of the twenty-fourth psalm were already in use as a blessing or grace before meals. But Paul now recounts a bit of table-talk, 27 perhaps from his own experience, which shows how this liberty of the Christian might have to be self-limited. Not all were so

serenely indifferent to the antecedents of the food on the table.
28 Some puritanic fellow-guest who had been asking nervous questions about where this piece of meat or that was bought, might whisper in horror, to a liberal Christian beside him, '**This was sacrificial meat,**' using for politeness' sake **sacrificial** (*hierothuton*), the pagan expression for what a Jew called *eidolothuton*. What is the liberal Christian to do? To shock his fellow-Churchman by calmly eating the food? To say, in act if not in word, 'That is nothing to me, neither your silly scruple nor the previous fortunes of this meat'? No, Paul insists, '**do not eat it.** Have regard to your friend's unenlightened conscience; don't dismiss him as a nuisance and
29 a busybody.' It is a plea that one must respect another's moral judgement upon his own life, even when one cannot follow it as a rule for one's own. Instantly and emphatically he declares that this concession to the weaker brother is not an abrogation of Christian liberty. He will not have the stronger enslaved by the weaker (vii. 23). Even as he pleads for con-
30 sideration, he feels bound to deny the right of any over-scrupulous Christians to fetter or **denounce** the freedom of others. The concession is purely voluntary, since any Christian may eat anything for which he has given **thanks** to God by
31 saying grace over the meal (Rom. xiv. 6). Still, if even a trifle like this at table would be a serious upset to anyone's faith, one should forego it. What is the determining thing in the free activities of life? Assertion of one's rights? Paul nobly stresses the supreme motive of consideration for the spiritual well-being of fellow-Christians, indeed for their **salvation**; it is implied that, if the liberal Christian ate the sacrificial food, the weaker Christian beside him might be irreparably damaged. The argument is substantially the same as in viii. 7–13. God is glorified as his Church displays such considerate love on the part of the strong for the weak (Rom. xiv. 13 f., xv. 6), and this applies to the very details of ordinary life, where one can help
32 or hurt another's soul. Even behaviour at a dinner-party may injure **the church of God.** At any and every turn, 'Christianity demands that your right shall not lead others astray, that it shall not do violence to that most sacred and delicate thing,

a human conscience,' as F. W. Robertson puts it. The double general demand of 31 and 32 turns on the specific point that the Christian behaviour of individuals, even in what seem to be minor matters of social etiquette, may further or hinder the supreme interest of God in his **church.** **Put no stumbling-block** comes in sharply ; it is the same term as **do no harm to anyone** (Phil. i. 10), and the positive side is to **satisfy** 33 **all men,** in the good sense, familiar to any Greek, of being serviceable to their well-being or of promoting their interests—in this case, their spiritual **advantage.** This rounds off the argument, for **advantage** is the same as **good for** above (verse 23). In fact, 'It is good advice to say, "Regard the opinions of others" ; and equally good advice to say, "Do not regard the opinions of others." We must balance between the two ; and over all, adjusting the scales, is the law of Christian love.'[1] xi.

Such a rule, his own (ix. 20 f.), is now held up for their 1 practice as his followers. **Copy me, as I copy Christ,** does not mean 'in so far as' but 'inasmuch as' I copy Christ. Here (as in Rom. xv. 3, etc.) it is the Christ who pleased not himself. 'Nothing is so effective in making us imitate Christ as caring for one's neighbour,' is the deep comment of Chrysostom. This consideration for the needs and even for the weaknesses of men, reaching to self-renouncing love (2 Cor. x. 1), was the feature in **Christ** (here a personal name) which deeply appealed to Paul, as we have had occasion to note already (on iv. 21). These words are not a plea to imitate him in externals, which is invariably an easy form of hero-worship (see vii. 7, 22). **Copy** or 'imitate' is the very word employed by Greeks when they spoke of the human soul not only following a master in moral ethics but even God, by reproducing the moral virtues which were supposed to embody the divine character. The Hellenistic Jew who wrote the *Epistle of Aristeas* (210) had already used the word in a similar connexion with the imitation of God : 'As God does good to the whole world, so you would be no harm to anyone if you copied him.' But the striking touch in Paul's counsel is that the Corinthians are to take him as an illustration of what is essential in the character

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[1] B. Jowett, *St. Paul's Epistles,* ii. 158.

of the Lord. As he had pled (in iv. 16, 17) for loyalty to his
2 Christian directions, so here he acknowledges that the church is **bearing** him **in mind** as their authority. Yet it is for more than a life answering dutifully to his teaching upon Christian **traditions** or principles that he now pleads; it is for adherence to his own personal example.

One of the Roman sages who turned up at Corinth during Paul's lifetime was Demetrius of Sunium. 'He is not a teacher of the truth,' said his friend Seneca proudly (*Epist.* xx. 9), 'but a witness to the truth'—that is, one who attested the Cynic ethic by his personal life. Similarly Paul pledges his character as well as his precepts for the Christian truth. At Corinth, as at Philippi (see Phil. iv. 9, iii. 17), he was aware that his converts were being exposed to influences which were affecting their loyalty to the gospel. Now, he had been the first Christian they knew. He was the founder of their church. He had stood, and he claims that he still stands, for them as an embodiment of the faith. Let them recollect his behaviour and the principles he had exhibited in his conduct. In appealing to them for loyalty to Christ, he does not hesitate to put himself forward, by way of example, as an interpreter of Christ. He could not only set forth in writing the truths of the gospel but actually claim that these were understood by considering his own character and methods. In one sense he was doing what what has often to be done on the mission-field. 'There may be something more finely sensitive in the modern humour, that tends more and more to withdraw a man's personality from the lessons he inculcates or the cause which he has espoused; but there is a loss herewith of wholesome responsibility; and when we find in the works of Knox, as in the epistles of Paul, the man himself standing nakedly forward, courting and anticipating criticism, putting his character, as it were, in pledge for the sincerity of his doctrine, we had best waive the question of delicacy and make our acknowledgements for a lesson of courage . . . and much light, otherwise unattainable, on the spirit in which great movements were initiated and carried forward.'[1] There was no question, in Paul's case, of a desire to domineer over his churches. There is no reason to suppose that he was insincere when he protested that in his very demands for obedience he was not infringing their spiritual independence. It was utterly distasteful to him that some should shout his name as a party-name, and this was not because he secretly thought all should have done the same. The edge of his plea, **Copy me, as I copy Christ,** lay in the fact that he was humbly but seriously conscious of meaning something to the Corinthians which was vital. As their first specimen of a Christian, he stood for the faith which he had planted in their lives. The reason why he defends so passionately his apostolic credentials, in writing to Galatia and Corinth, was that these were being attacked in order to undermine his gospel in the churches of his mission, and attacked by some through sneers at his personal character. If he recalls the Corinthians especially to what he was and what he taught, he does so in order to counteract influences which were strong and subtle as they criticized his own principles and line of action. He appeals, therefore, to the memories of his converts, partly by way of affectionate reminder, partly as their authority, knowing or hoping that, as they still bore in mind his counsels and personal lead, they would be rallied against the interlopers on the spot. In iv. 16 the appeal is general; here it swings from a special instance, the need for loving consideration on the part of Christians. It was never a demand to echo his opinions or to follow his prejudices. Even although it might be suspected of pretension or egoism, he therefore did not hesitate to use this appeal when the minds of some in the Church were becoming unsteady. Let them continue to be imitators of him as a Christian. There was no other alternative in the circumstances than to awaken affectionate memories of himself, if they were to be held fast to the Christ of his faith and theirs, theirs because it had been his first. Even to-day, when as a rule people know Christianity far more through books than any of Paul's converts did, it is an acknowledged fact that Christian faith depends often upon belief in some guide or spiritual counsellor who stands more effectively than anything for the reality of religion. Struggling aspirations may be reinforced, vague doubts may be resolved, and loyalty to the cause may be revived and purified, as men are able to see their cherished end in the personality of one to whom they have good cause to pay grateful homage. So Paul sincerely felt that his converts at Corinth would be helped to resist divisive influences if they would only recollect and imitate himself, since by thus laying themselves open to his influence they would come under the ascendancy of the Lord to whom he himself was submitted. So deeply does he feel the need of this appeal that he does not add, as Pliny does in a minor connexion, 'May those who think I should be so closely copied prove better than myself' (*Epist.* vi. 11). It is the fact of his imitation of Christ, not its degree, which is the urgent matter at the moment. From one point of view this was equivalent to the recognition of apostolic authority. From another it was the recognition of one to whom, in God's providence, they had been indebted for their first revelation of an actual Christian life. Indeed the two sides were one for Paul, as we have already had occasion to notice (on ix. 23). Had it not been for the self-revelations forced from him by mean souls at Corinth, we should hardly have realized how essentially his authority and his personal example were a unity, and how misleading it is to speak of the former as purely official. Naturally he was a leader of men. Even before his conversion, he had shown energy and the instinct for command. He was also by temperament impatient, even inclined to assert himself not only before God but before men. Yet these qualities were purified, though not obliterated, in his Christian vocation. Thus he could honestly ask the Corinthians to take him as an example of Christlike consideration.

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[1] From R. L. Stevenson's essay on John Knox in *Men and Books*.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP
(xi. 3–34)

'I do praise or commend you for always bearing me in mind (as you tell me in your letter), for being so loyal to my traditions in Church-order and belief. But——.' He had heard some facts which lent a different colour to this report, which he thus acknowledges with a touch of irony. One was a serious case of irreverence at the celebration of the eucharist, which ran counter to his traditions. Before calling attention to this, however, he discusses another point of worship, which had come up since he left (3–15).

Some of the emancipated Christian women at Corinth had been asserting their equality with men by coming to worship, or at any rate taking part in worship, without any covering on their heads. The religious kaleidoscope of the Mediterranean world at this period is obscure, but although in the synagogue women had an inferior position and took no active part in the service, it is certain that they were honoured in some of the cults, especially in the Eleusinian and the Dionysian ; there were priestesses of Isis (p. xxi.). In the worship of the Church women would not merely share the holy kiss but pray aloud and speak, as moved by the Spirit. To this no one took exception, not even Paul himself. Why, then, it was argued, should devout women be obliged to wear a covering veil on the head when men did not ? Did not men and women worship bareheaded in Greek rites ? As the Christian meetings were held in a large room of some private house, it was felt that, while women's heads might be covered out of doors, there was no reason why the veil should be retained within the Household of the Lord. Like a Roman matron, the Christian woman would pull the corner of her robe over her head as she walked from her house to the meeting, but surely indoors she was in a family circle, where the head was not covered. Paul vigorously objects. The common opinion is that he resented such an innovation as an undesirable departure from social etiquette, since only women of loose character appeared in public bareheaded. There was a Roman rule, which would appeal to Corinthians, that ' usually women cover their heads and men uncover them, when they go outside the house ' (Plutarch, *Roman Questions*, xiv.), though this is not quite certain. The conservative Valerius Maximus (vi. 3. 10) had just noted, indeed, that one of the first causes of divorce was a married woman daring to appear out of doors with nothing on her head. But all this is beside the point. Paul's ruling is on worship. It has nothing to do with women's dress out of doors, and he treats the Corinthian innovation as irreligious rather than indecorous. His curiously warm objection to it is primarily based on a belief that the Creation order controlled life in the Church, and on a rabbinic interpretation of that order. A covering on the head is a mark of social deference and inferiority, in short; God made woman subject to man, and therefore for her to worship bareheaded in man's presence would be as unnatural as for him to worship in her presence with his head covered. It would be unnatural, especially as it would violate the original plan for the sexes before God (3–12, 13–15).

3 **But I would like you to understand this: Christ is the head of
every man, man is the head of woman, and God is the head
4 of Christ. Any man who prays or prophesies with a veil on
5 his head dishonours his head, while any woman who prays
or prophesies without a veil on her head dishonours her
6 head; she is no better than a shaven woman. If a woman
will not veil herself, she should cut off her hair as well. But
she ought to veil herself; for it is disgraceful that a woman
7 should have her hair cut off or be shaven. Man does not
require to have a veil on his head, for he represents *the
likeness and supremacy of God*; but woman represents the
8 supremacy of man. (Man was not made from woman,
9 woman was made from man; and man was not created
10 for woman, but woman for man.) Therefore, in view of the
angels, woman must wear a symbol of subjection on her
11 head. (Of course, in the Lord, woman does not exist apart
12 from man, any more than man apart from woman; for
as woman was made from man, so man is now made from
13 woman, while both, like all things, come from God.) Judge
for yourselves; is it proper for an unveiled woman to pray
14 to God? Surely nature herself teaches you that, while long
hair is disgraceful for a man, for a woman long hair is a
15 glory? Her hair is given her as a covering.**

The sweeping statement at the start goes further than Paul 3
needed to go, but he wished to find a sanction for his ruling in
the original hierarchy of the universe as laid down in Genesis.
As he intends to speak of the physical **head,** he begins by using
it figuratively to describe the broad design of God. 'God,
Christ, Christians'—he had already said (iii. 22, 23); but
now it is 'God, Christ, man, woman.' **Man** as the lord of 4
creation would be violating the law of his position under God,
as God's direct **likeness** and representative, if he suggested, 7
even in dress, any inferiority. At worship, as elsewhere, his
headship must be preserved. Did some of the Corinthian men
follow a Jewish practice, which was beginning to spread in
some circles, of having the head covered during prayer? Or
does this remark merely lead up to the denunciation of women 5
who dared to uncover their heads as the men did? The latter 6
practice is pronounced **disgraceful,** as disgraceful as if she had
her hair cut off or her head **shaven.** This was a well-known
reproach for Greek women. One of Menander's comedies was
on the outrage done to a girl by a jealous lover who cut her
hair short, and the scene was laid at Corinth; a **shaven** woman
was **disgraced,** even if her head was shaved or cropped against
her will, and much more so if she cut her own hair short, by
way of aping men. The religious novelist who wrote the *Acts
of Thomas* (liii.) was true to life when he described shameless
women as 'immodest creatures who walked about bareheaded.'
What we call 'barefaced' was in those days 'bareheaded.'
The modern reader finds it difficult to understand why
Paul grew so shocked and indignant over the question whether
or not a woman should have something on her head when she
joined actively in public worship; but for the apostle a woman
praying or preaching bareheaded was contravening the divine
order which made man supreme over her and therefore entitled
alone to appear bareheaded. As Calvin and Bengel saw,
'is' means **represents** (as in xi. 25). A male being exhibits on 7
earth the divine authority and dominion, as he was directly
created by God; he has **supremacy** over the female who in
turn **represents the supremacy** of man—not his **likeness,** for she
is his counterpart in the order of creation, **made from** him and

8 **for** him. The veil that covers her head is a sign or symbol of this subordinate position, to be worn out of reverential respect
10 for **(in view of) the angels** who uphold the divine order. **The angels** here are more than a periphrasis for the divine Being; they are the divine executive. Paul has in mind the midrash on Gen. i. 26 f., which made good angels not only mediators of the Law (Gal. iii. 19), but guardians of the created order. Indeed, according to one ancient midrash, reflected in Philo, when God said, 'Let us make man,' he was addressing the angels. They were specially present at worship; in his Greek Bible the apostle read allusions to this, e.g. in Ps. cxxxviii. 1 ('I will sing praise to thee before the angels'), while in apocalyptic (Tobit xiii. 12, Test. Levi iii. 21, Rev. viii. 3) they were supposed to mediate the prayers of the faithful as well as
7 revelations made to seers and prophets at a service. **Supremacy** is 'glory' in the sense of pre-eminent position and authority; it carries on the idea of **head** as lordship and mastery, since God's glory shines out in man as the head of the household, the 'paterfamilias,' holding his honoured position under God his Maker. Since a covering for the head signified subjection, it was only appropriate therefore for women. Rabbis artificially found a text for this in Num. v. 18. Paul is content to assume it as binding for married women; the reason why he does not mention others is probably because they were under their fathers or guardians, whereas married women were more likely to be independent. Besides, the argument from Genesis (ii. 18–23) referred directly to matrons, as the typical daughters of Eve. His rabbinical deductions ignore the fact that in the other passage (Gen. i. 27), where he finds that the male represents God's **likeness**, it is both male and female who are meant: 'God created man after his own likeness, male and female.' It was really the second of the creation stories that was important for him, as a man trained in rabbinic exegesis. From the first he merely took **the likeness** of God, not the truth that both sexes, as opposed to animals, were made in that likeness; from the second he inferred that respect for the male sex
10 before God must be displayed by the female, and displayed particularly in wearing some sort of covering for the head.

The English version—‘ a woman ought to have power on her head because of the angels ’—might suggest, as it did suggest to Tertullian first, that she required to be protected against the lustful looks of evil angels, as though at worship a woman whose beauty was unveiled was specially exposed to malign supernatural influences. There were traditions in some circles of Judaism to this effect. But **angels** more naturally are taken to be good angels ; **veil** does not mean a covering for the eyes but for the head ; and the word for ‘ power ’ is used in a strange, derivative sense, equivalent to veil or **symbol of subjection,** which may possibly go back to a Semitic term, taken by popular etymology to denote covering as well as authority. Indeed at a very early period the term was changed to ‘ veil.’ What Paul intends to say is not that she exercised power, but that power was exercised over her. ‘ Covering ’ is for him not so much a mark of her honour and dignity as a respectable woman in society, although he brings that in ; it is pre-eminently a mark of her subordination as a daughter of Eve. Before man, the lord of creation, woman must have her head covered at worship, since that is the proper way for her to recognize the divine order at Creation.

A later rabbi, in the beginning of the second century 11
(Beresh. rabba, 22), observed, ‘ not the man without the woman, not the woman without the man, and not both without the Shekinah ’ or divine Presence ; but this referred to procreation. Paul's assertion of men and women being essential 12
to one another **in the Lord** is naturally deeper. It is the one lasting sentence in the whole discussion. In fact, this admission or qualification really undermines the patriarchal theory which he has been defending with forced, rabbinic subtlety, viz. that the order in Gen. i.–ii. determines not only the relations of God and man, but of man and woman : ‘ he for God only, she for God in him.’ His Christian sense does reassert itself for a moment. Yet the divine order of original Creation was for him decisive on marital (vi. 16) as well as on messianic (xv. 45 f.) relations. He is so eager to uphold the social custom 13
of women wearing something on their heads, however, that he

14 now seeks confirmation of this ruling in natural propriety. But with equally unconvincing effect. After the rabbinic arguments, his Greek hearers must have welcomed an appeal to **nature.** But they would be taken aback by being asked if **long hair** was not **disgraceful for men.** What of the long-haired Spartan heroes in far-off days ? What of philosophers at the present day who wore their hair long as an ascetic trait, or to show their indifference to the world ? Why, ' the Greek wears long hair on his head because he is a Greek, not a barbarian,' as the moralist Apollonius protested (*Epist.* viii.). Paul thought it effeminate, however, and praised the braided tresses (1 Pet. iii. 3) of woman as not merely a **glory,** or orna-
15 ment, but as a sort of **covering.** He actually suggests that her long hair is nature's sign that she should always have something on her head. Are there not unwritten laws in nature for us ? The implication is that as **nature** has provided woman with a head-dress of hair, she is intended, not, of course, to consider this as a substitute for further covering, but to wear a head-dress when she is praying to God in the company of men, nature being regarded as supplying the norm even for such attire. The inference is far-fetched, though the general principle of finding a sanction in nature for such details of *toilette* was familiar to the age. Thus Epictetus (i. 16. 4) seriously argues that nature intends men to grow beards ; hair on the chin may be useless, but it is a divine sign which ought to be observed carefully in order to keep up the distinction between the sexes. Which is underneath the plea of the apostle here. There may have been circumstances in the local situation of which we know nothing, which moved him to take this strong line. Probably the assertion of freedom at this point was made by some who were pert rather than spiritually minded. However this may be, conscious of having got into an impasse, he cuts off further discussion with a brusque, impatient word :

16 **If anyone presumes to raise objections on this point—well, I acknowledge no other mode of worship, and neither do the churches of God.**

'To be contentious,' as the English version has it, is to set up one's own opinions or **to raise objections**, here against an apostle's authority or against the common judgement of Christendom (iv. 17). The innovators at Corinth must fall into line with catholic practice. As indeed they did. We hear of no further trouble over this issue. Whatever was thought of Paul's reasons for the verdict, whether the determining considerations were drawn from ordinary social etiquette or not, he carried his point. Tertullian witnesses to the custom in North Africa at the end of the second century, and Hippolytus at Rome, as Chrysostom does for the Church at Antioch at the end of the fourth century. It was one of the points on which this epistle became regulative for Church order. Christian communions which have modified his teaching on recourse to law-courts, and even on the eucharist, have firmly adhered to what he said about the iniquity of allowing a bare-headed woman to worship in church.

The paragraph exhibits the apostle hampered by ideas and customs of his age, anxious lest the religious freedom he proclaimed should be compromised by ardent souls, and at the same time half-conscious that his own principle of Christian equality for the sexes did not exactly square with the dress regulation which he felt bound to enforce, in his anxiety to prevent any of his own churches breaking loose from a tradition about garb in public worship which had been adopted by the Jewish Christian communities. Even at the risk of being taunted with debarring women from religious privileges such as they enjoyed in a cult like that of Isis, he takes a conservative line on the issue. The more permanent items of the discussion are that he never dreamed of forbidding women to pray or preach in public worship under the inspiration of the Spirit, and that he was sensible that a breach of decorum might be due to lack of moral delicacy. Still, to turn a social convention, which was far from universal, into a moral obligation binding upon all, is doubtfully wise, however well-meaning its motive may be.

The contrast between this piece on women's attire in worship and the following directions upon the Lord's supper (17–34) is as dramatic as anything in Paul's correspondence. In the former he is of his age; the watermarks of contemporary prejudice are visible in arguments and conclusion. But in the next passage his message has proved to be permanent. Few passages have been more often read aloud and read with more reverent care than his instructions on the communion service. Here he is writing, not as one who knows in part, but with a flash of final insight into the religious realities at stake. He was never more inspired than in this spiritual counsel on the deepest service of worship. Indeed we may regret, as Erasmus did, that he was not more explicit about the simple ritual of the feast.

For the sake of clearness, though it is to anticipate what is said below, we may reconstruct the situation thus, in the light of hints from contemporary evidence about the arrangements at such meals. At Corinth, as elsewhere, there might be no single person who acted as host or presiding minister at the informal love-feast. Later, the service was ordered by one of the officials, eventually by the bishop, but it is an anachronism to suppose that this was invariably the case in the primitive communities, though naturally an apostle would preside if he happened to be present, and especially if he called such a supper to be held. The procedure at Corinth is hardly intelligible, however, except on the assumption that each Christian felt free to start the supper by pronouncing his own blessing over a loaf, and that after a long interval a special cup was similarly drunk. The sacrificial note was struck, or was supposed to be struck, in the blessing over the loaf, which represented the body or personality of the Lord. But at Corinth the irregularities made worshippers more concerned about the social side of the feast than about the sacrificial, or, at any rate, by their independent action they were turning the supper into a sort of private celebration of communion, which seemed to Paul to be inconsistent with the common spirit of the rite. The modern who regards such a blend of the eucharist with a social meal as strangely casual and incredibly irreverent, must recollect how natural this collocation of food and fellowship was in the ancient world, where ordinary eating and drinking had more religious significance than is realized to-day. In the primitive communities, those especially who had been born within Judaism never ate without asking God's blessing over the food. Table fellowship was indeed a distinctive feature of the Jewish faith, which separated them from the pagan world ; as they ate their food together, after thanking God for it, they were separated from the defiled world of paganism. It was a survival of this belief and custom, indeed, which had led to the trouble at Antioch, where the meal in question involved communion (Gal. ii. 12). Consequently, if one loaf or one cup was specially connected with the Lord's death, at the Christian love-feast, this did not imply that the rest of the food was what we call ' secular.' The secular spirit which Paul reprobates was connected with the behaviour of the selfish Corinthians, not with any part of what they ate or drank at the supper.

But in giving you the following injunction I cannot commend 17
you ; for you are the worse, not the better, for assembling
together.
First of all, in your church-meetings I am told that cliques 18
prevail. And I partly believe it ; there must be parties 19
among you, if genuine Christians are to be recognized.
But this makes it impossible for you to eat the ' Lord's ' 20
supper when you hold your gatherings. As you eat, every- 21
one takes his own supper ; one goes hungry while another
gets drunk. What ! have you no houses to eat and drink 22
in ? Do you think you can show disrespect to the church
of God and put the poor to shame ? What can I say to you ?
Commend you ? Not for this.

The injunction is to maintain one of the traditions, a mode of 17 worship, which he had passed on to them, the sacred tradition of the Lord's supper. Worship never leaves people the same as when they began the service. They ought to be the better for it, but common worship, even its most solemn rites, may make them worse than they were, if it is carried out thoughtlessly and carelessly, as was the case in the church-meetings at

Corinth. To worship for **worse** instead of for better, at the sacrament of communion, is to **gather** in such a fashion that the worshippers **incur condemnation** from the Lord (verse 34), receiving punishment instead of praise and blessing.

18 **First of all,** or (as we say), to begin with, the charge against them is that they were carrying party-spirit into the very festival where all should be at one. 'I'm half-inclined to **believe** what I am told is happening.' Worship ought to raise people above any consciousness of social differences; at its best, it lifts them into such an intense experience of all that they have in common, that everything else is forgotten. As they lift their hearts to God, they join hands. So Browning describes what happened:

> On the first of the Feast of Feasts,
> The Dedication Day,
> When the Levites joined the Priests
> At the Altar in holy array . . .
> When the thousands, rear and van,
> Swarming with one accord,
> Became as a single man
> (Look, gesture, thought and word),
> In praising and thanking the Lord.

19 But at Corinth, Paul was shocked and indignant to learn, worshippers were splitting up into coteries or **parties,** instead of becoming 'a single man.' It is not schisms or 'heresies,' but **cliques,** that are the trouble. The appearance of this word *hairesis* in the vocabulary of the Christian religion is due to Paul (see Gal. v. 20), and it bears a sinister sense which was practically unknown to pre-Christian thought in Greek or in Jewish speech. Instead of meaning personal preference or choice, or a special school of philosophy, it acquired the connotation of a private, individual line, which afterwards was identified with some set of opinions involving an explicit difference of belief. In the present context, it denotes merely a party or clique inside the Church, but even so it is blamed, as a break-away from God's call and command within the corporate body of the faithful. It is owing to the dominating conception of the Church as a divine, comprehensive unity that the Greek word **therefore** bears a bad sense here for

Paul; it is an expression of the unchristian, divisive spirit which really destroys the sacred Church (see on iii. 17). God's living Church has parts, but it has no parties.

The significance of the weekly re-unions for Church fellowship must be realized, if justice has to be done to the apostle's alarm. Nowhere else could the local converts enjoy the consciousness of being one in the Lord. There, refined and unrefined, masters and employees, mistresses and servants, officials and hucksters, people from the suburbs and from the slums, poor and well-to-do, respectable citizens and reclaimed waifs, all had the opportunity of owning their common debt to the Lord. But the temptation was to allow class-feeling or personal tastes to intervene. The religious meaning of the re-union might be lost in a sense of awkwardness and self-consciousness. Like drew to like. One set preferred to sit with members of its own social rank. And so forth. The sensitive shrank from the rougher element in the membership, and forgot the tie that bound them all together, as they held their love-feast with its communion service.

Before exposing this scandal, however, Paul remarks in a resigned spirit, 'Well, it must be so!' A century later, Justin Martyr cited a saying of Jesus that 'there shall be divisions and dissensions' (the very words used here by Paul), but there is no need to imagine that any echo of this supposed saying is to be heard in our epistle. Paul merely observes that, after all, such party-spirit or class-feeling is to be expected, not that it had been predicted. There is a stern sigh in his reflection. It is artificial to argue that he could not have spoken of cliquishness as he does here in the same letter in which he had denounced party-spirit so severely as he did in i. 10 f., and that this difference of tone points to the present allusion as coming from a letter written before the situation had become so distracted as it was when he wrote the previous passage. The repudiation of party-spirit is not less serious here than it is in i. 10 f., though Paul expresses himself differently. To reflect, with a touch of irony, that such misbehaviour is inevitable, human nature being what it is, or that there is a providence over these distressing phenomena of Church-life, is not to condone them. 'It's consoling, at any rate, to think that such disorders show who is loyal and truly reverent!' **Genuine Christians** are those free from the selfishness and irreverence which disqualify any worshipper before a God who has his definite tests of character and conduct. The adjective is the opposite of that translated **disqualified** in ix. 27 and **failure** in 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

20 The misconduct was due to the fact that worship in the primitive communities, simple as it was, gave opportunities for class-feeling and private grouping which violated the very object of fellowship with God. Like some of the religious fraternities or revivalist groups in the pagan world, they met in the basilica of some private house, where evening worship took the form of a supper for the members, not unlike the feasts held by Greek guilds; the faithful gathered for fellowship in the Oriental fashion of sharing a common meal, the provisions being mainly contributed by the well-to-do. One name for this was 'love-feast.' It was a naïve outward expression of the brotherly love which knit the members together. Probably it is the 'breaking of bread' mentioned in the primitive records, a household service of fellowship at a meal, where, as in Judaism, there would be talk of God's blessing and some refreshing intercourse of soul with soul in the gathering. As it happens, the only two allusions to this feast in the New Testament are occasioned by its abuses. Here, as in the more pungent description of Judas (verse 12), a greedy behaviour is denounced, which is more than bad manners. Instead of waiting for other members to arrive, as, for example, slaves who might not be able to get away from household duties till later in the evening, the wealthier started the supper. Did they hurry on in order to enjoy some indulgence in exciting phases of 'speaking with tongues'? Was the amount of wine consumed by some due to the current use of wine as a religious stimulant (Eph. v. 18)? Or was this hasty action the result of mere selfishness? They had brought the food and wine. Why should they not begin, even if all the others had not turned up? So each took **his own supper**, and he did so, sitting by himself or with his particular set, instead of mingling freely with his

fellow-Christians. As in the informal religious meals of Judaism, each guest might say the blessing over his own food (*Berachoth*, vi. 6). It would appear that at this love-feast the sacrament (as we call it) of the Lord's supper was celebrated by the blessing and breaking of a particular loaf at the beginning, followed by a particular cup towards the close, and that the initial blessing or thanksgiving over the loaf covered the cup as well. This might be carried out reverently. Paul takes no exception to the precise arrangement of the meal as practised at Corinth, lasting probably from sundown to midnight.
But what happened was that when some of the poorer trades- 21
men and slaves arrived, the provisions were exhausted. They were humiliated to find nothing to eat; worse still, they found some of the early-comers hilariously intoxicated. 'Self-indulgent creatures,' Paul exclaims, 'acting as if they were at a private dinner-party in their own **houses**, instead of at **the Lord's supper!'** The emphasis falls on **the Lord's.** 'What kind of worship is it that makes some of your fellow-members in the Lord feel embarrassed and ashamed, as though they were left out?' Paul urges that the love-feast is a true communion, not only with **the Lord** who had sacrificed himself for this purpose, but with one another in the Lord's Body. As **we all partake of the one Bread** or loaf, **we are one Body** (x. 17). To behave as if the festival were no more than an ordinary banquet, where one could gratify his own appetites, and to treat with cool disrespect any fellow member, is to profane the sacred supper. '**You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and also of the table of dæmons** (x. 21). Neither can you eat the Lord's supper if you violate the binding fellowship of his Church.' It is not sufficient to break off all connexion with pagan communion feasts; even inside the Christian communion, one may be guilty of what excludes a worshipper from any real fellowship with **the Lord** of the feast.

It is essential to bear in mind this nexus of the two sides in communion, if one is to understand Paul's interpretation of the rite. Our modern individualism does not make it easy to realize that he is speaking here with the same passion as when he told the liberals that by sinning against the brotherhood they were sinning against Christ himself. How could one worship the Lord at the sacred supper, if he was rude and selfish in treating a poor slave or tradesman or dock labourer, some brother for whose sake Christ had died? Such conduct is pronounced far worse than discourtesy; it is positive irreverence, a profane caricature of the sacrament, which shuts off any worshipper from the Lord, even though he may eat his loaf and drink his cup of wine in the Lord's name. Such a breach of love and brotherhood is denounced as a proof that there was no **proper sense of the Body** (verse 29) to which worshippers professed to belong and in which they were outwardly celebrating a festival of fellowship. The urgency of Paul's instructions on this point falls out of focus, unless it is placed in line with what he had already written on corporate fellowship in i. 10 f., viii. 9–13, and x. 17, 23–33, as well as with what he intends to write in xii.–xiv. We have here his second exposition of the Body (see on vi. 20 and pp. 171 f.).

22 The shameful, shocking feature is not an irreverent use of the communion elements (as we call them), but irreverence to God in the person of his **Church**; **disrespect** is shown to him by this open contempt for his poorer members. Such a gross violation of charity and kindness is another (iii. 17) form of sacrilege, as Paul views it. 'Christ could not suffer that the temple should serve for a place of mart,' as Hooker puts it (i. 43), 'nor the apostle of Christ that the Church should be made an inn,' a place where individuals or private groups were free to attend to themselves, no matter what happened to less fortunate people. Or, as Chrysostom told his congregation, 'the Lord's supper ought to be common. For the property of the master does not belong to one servant and not to another; it is common to them all.' For the apostle, any form of private devotion which ministers to class-feeling or to selfish absorption in one's own soul, to the neglect of other Christians, is nothing but a profane outrage upon the holy communion of the Lord.

'You expect me to **commend** you, in view of all this, you self-satisfied creatures? No indeed,' he sarcastically declares, 'not for this kind of behaviour! You see nothing wrong in it ? I do, I your apostle, for I know the original and authoritative significance of the Supper. As you appear to have forgotten what I taught you, I repeat it.'

The story of 23–26 is not told for its own sake ; it leads up to the instructions of 27–34, which form the sequel to 20–22. Inevitably we compare this prelude with the other three traditions of what had been the last supper of the Lord on earth, though it was not the last supper of the Lord for his followers. But the Corinthian Christians knew none of these three traditions, written or oral. All they had learned about the meal in Jerusalem had been what their own apostle told them. There is no suggestion that his tradition had been called in question by the Palestinian missioners at Corinth, or that the offenders of 20–22 were reverting to some more primitive type of love-feast which did not attach any special importance to the final supper. The **I** in verse 23 is not in tacit contrast to rival witnesses (' whatever others may pass on to you ') but to the following **you.** Had Paul been suspected of introducing any novelty into the service, affecting the historical memories of what Jesus had said or done, these eyewitnesses or missioners would have objected to it. But his account of the Passion as well as of the subsequent Resurrection was admittedly on the traditional lines of apostolic testimony. His interpretation had indeed its own characteristic features. He interpreted this sacrament, as he did baptism, in close connexion with his belief in the living Christ and the living Church. But apparently the interpretation of baptism was familiar and unobjectionable to other churches than his own, unless we are to suppose that **Surely you know** (in Rom. vi. 3 f.) means no more than a hope that it will commend itself to their approval. There is not evidence to prove that his eucharistic teaching did more than develop germs already present in the usual love-feast of the communities. At this social and devotional meal, Christians of the primitive period may have loved to recall similar occasions when Jesus had been their host ; but they did not live on wistful recollections of Galilee, nor even on the idea that their invisible host now was the risen Lord. In view of the strong eschatological hope, it is more than hard to imagine that they could have ignored what the resurrection really meant, a victory over the evil powers of sin and death, nor what this victory had cost the Lord (xv. 3). Some thought of this cannot fail to have been in their minds. No meal they had ever eaten with the Lord possessed the significance of that last supper; it was the significance of life through death, with the assurance of an unbroken fellowship between him and them, in spite of what was to happen and what did happen on the cross. Whatever they might forget, they would remember that, in their common worship.

The underlying thought of the supper in the synoptic records is that Jesus was facing death, as he had faced life, for the sake of others, to carry out a saving end or action of God on behalf of his chosen. Already in his vocation as God's Son he had been going out freely, far beyond the range of traditional religion, to achieve the moral redemption of the lost, and he looked forward to bringing in the final Order by becoming a sacrifice for their sakes. This conviction, which is organic to the Gospel of Mark and to the life which it sketches, implied that he connected suffering with his vocation as God's Son or the Son of Man. It was present to his mind when he uttered the saying, **The Son of Man has come to give his life a ransom for many** (i.e. for souls outside as well as inside the pale of Israel), a saying which is one of the most self-authenticating in the record.[1] Ransom or freedom for lives in thraldom to evil was linked, quite untechnically, to the thought of a divine covenant in the Old Testament (e.g. Ps. cxi. 9). It is in the wake of this utterance that the words come about his blood being **covenant blood shed for many**, and 'if these words are not genuine, there are few recorded words in history which can claim to be genuine.'[2] Paul's interpretation, like that in the Fourth Gospel, attests an authentic line of belief, going back to the Lord himself, apart from which the acceptance of the eucharist in the primitive communities, with their common meals, leaves an unintelligible hiatus. The words at the last supper were not read back into the record by Christians meditating upon Paul's tradition or any other sacrificial view of the crucifixion. Neither were they a sudden improvisation of the Lord at the end. The simple rite, with its double parable in action, as it were, was accompanied by words which were the ripe expression of what had been a growing conviction of his divine mission. To words and deeds alike the Church looked back, seeing in them the sacrifice which was to prove the creative and sustaining power of life in the fellowship until the End.

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[1] R. Otto, *Reichgottes und Menschensohn*, pp. 210 f., 245 f.; F. C. Burkitt, *Christian Beginnings*, pp. 29 f.

[2] A. D. Nock in *Essays on the Trinity and the Incarnation*, p. 95.

Outwardly, indeed, the rite recalled elements in its historical setting. While arrangements for worship in the primitive period were commonly suggested by the synagogue, in this case, there was no synagogal precedent. In fact, there could not be. But as Jesus died during passover week, probably on the very day of the paschal sacrifice in the temple, this led some Christians to associate their festival with the passover of Israel (v. 7), which it had superseded. Some items in the two rituals are indeed curiously similar, so far as the private gatherings of Israel during this sacred season are concerned, when a household or a group of kindred spirits would meet for evening devotions. Thus Paul calls the eucharistic cup **the cup of blessing,** which happens to be the name for the third cup in the paschal meal as well as for a special cup at the *kiddush*, or Friday ' sanctification ' service, where it was followed by two loaves, to symbolize the sabbath supply of manna. Also, as in the paschal meal, the bread and the cup are explained. Yet what Jesus left out is more significant than what he retained. Besides, the paschal family meal was never thought of as a sacrifice ; no loaf or cup had any such significance here, any more than in the *kiddush* fare. Both were indeed prolonged, convivial evening meals of a religious character, to promote fellowship and to commemorate a great deliverance in the history of Israel. The meal arranged by **the Lord on the night he was betrayed** was like one such supper, but the common features are far from proving that it was a conscious adaptation of either. The aim and the spirit of it were his own creation. The original Lord's supper was a fresh religious formation, associated with one loaf and one of the many cups, in order to re-enact with joy and reverence the final deliverance from evil which his sufferings were destined by God to realize, together with the continuous communion now open to the faithful through their living Lord, and also the uplifting hope of a completed supernatural triumph over death. What patriotic Jews did annually, Christians now did weekly, if not daily. All was bound up with the Lord, whom they were never to forget, as they constantly observed the simple household rite which he had commanded.

If the three synoptic records do not include the command for the repetition of the rite, it is not because the churches were living on a merely social meal which was supposed to be held in presence of their host, the invisible Christ. Even the feast in the second-century Didache, which departs so strangely from all four of the New Testament traditions, is more than a meal. The probability is that the eucharist in the love-feast was so regular a feature of Church life, when the Gospels were written, that its repetition could be taken for granted. In which case, Paul would be no more than making explicit what was implicit in the other traditions, whose primary interest is to record the last supper in its historical significance as a feast where the Host did not merely provide for his guests or friends, but provided himself as the food they required for their individual and corporate life within the new community of God. It was table-fellowship indeed, such as Jews understood, but table-fellowship with a content of divine self-sacrifice, which differentiated the covenant as the new distinctive basis of the Christian Church. **The deliverer will come from Sion . . . this is my covenant with them, when I take their sins away.** So the prophet had predicted, whom Paul quotes in Rom. xi. 26, 27. But the deliverer had come, Christians knew, to forgive and unite God's people. The eucharist was their assurance of this communion based on sacrifice.

23 **I passed on to you what I received from the Lord himself, namely, that on the night he was betrayed the Lord Jesus**

took a loaf, and after thanking God he broke it, saying, 24
'This means my body broken for you ; do this in memory
of me.' In the same way he took the cup after supper, 25
saying, 'This cup means the new *covenant* ratified *by* my
blood ; as often as you drink it, do it in memory of me.'
For as often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you 26
proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Hence anyone 27
who eats the loaf or drinks the cup of the Lord carelessly,
will have to answer for a sin against the body and the blood
of the Lord. Let a man test himself ; then he can eat 28
from the loaf and drink from the cup. For he who eats and 29
drinks without a proper sense of the Body, eats and drinks
to his own condemnation. That is why many of you are ill 30
and infirm, and a number even dead. If we only judged 31
our own lives truly, we would not come under the Lord's
judgment. As it is, we are chastened when we are judged 32
by him, so that we may not be condemned along with the
world.

Well then, my brothers, when you gather for a meal, wait for 33
one another ; and if anyone is hungry, let him eat at 34
home. You must not gather only to incur condemnation.
I will give you instructions upon the other matters when I come.

Like the story of the various appearances of the Lord after 23 his resurrection (xv. 3–7), the story of what had occurred at the original Lord's supper formed part of the apostolic tradition which Paul had **received from the Lord himself**, through those actually present at the event. **From** indicates the source of the tradition, not the means by which it reached him. There is no hint of a special revelation. The phrase means that his tradition went back to the Lord himself, who knew what was essential to participation in his own supper. It is not possible in English, as it is in Latin (*tradidi . . . tradebatur*), to preserve the idea that the verb **passed on** not only corresponds to the noun 'tradition,' but is the same as the verb **betrayed. Betrayed,** again, is the same word as **delivered up** in Rom. iv. 25, where it belongs to a reminiscence of Isa. liii. 12. **Delivered up** might be the meaning here, but it is not the general providential ordering of the Passion which is in Paul's mind so much as the actual treachery of Judas **on the** critical **night,** though this too belonged to the divine deliverance of the Lord into the hands of sinful men. **He was betrayed** is more than a note of time, however. It is not simply a black frame for the golden picture of the Lord's self-sacrifice; it contrasts the ritual mourning at some of the pagan sacral feasts over the death of a deity or divine hero (symbolizing the revival of life in each successive spring after the dead winter), with a death in history which was self-chosen and followed by a resurrection once and for all.

24 The sacrificial significance of the rite first emerges in connexion with the **loaf** or cake of bread. Strictly speaking, to 'break bread' might mean no more than to distribute it; but **for you** is as sacrificial as in John vi. 45 ('the bread is my flesh, for the life of the world'), not merely 'a gift for you.' Some word like **broken,** or its equivalent (**given**) in the Lucan tradition, is essential; pious editors probably omitted it because it did not seem to apply literally to the body on the cross. It requires only a moment's reflection to realize that in the original situation the phrase, 'This is my body,' implies that 'is' again (as in xi. 7) means not identity but equivalence —as German has it, not '*das ist,*' but '*das heisst.*' Jesus was in his own body when he spoke the words. Here, as elsewhere, the natural sense of the Greek copula is **means,** which is unambiguous. He intended the bread to signify or represent his
25 **body** or himself. So with **the cup** into which red wine had been poured from a skin or jar. This really and effectively represents the ratification of **the new covenant by** his **blood.** It was a **new covenant** in a deeper sense than any prophet had anticipated (Jer. xxxi. 31, Zech. ix. 11). Thanks to the sacrifice of **Christ** their **paschal lamb** (v. 7), the Christian fellowship now worshipped in the new, final order of communion with God. The thanksgiving which rose from the faithful at every service was not merely for food and wine as God's general gifts to men, but for what their bread and wine signified, i.e. the living sacrifice of the Lord which had inaugurated communion on the basis of his death. The traditions of the supper in the

first three Gospels speak of the blood as **shed for you** or **for many** (i.e. men of all nations). Perhaps Paul thought this might be taken for granted, since (in the light of Exod. xxiv. 8) it was self-evident that a covenant implied the shedding of **blood,** whose equivalent **you drink.** The variations are only in expression. Common to all is the belief that the sacrificial death of Jesus **ratified** or made effective a final and full communion with God. What is fresh in Paul's interpretation is that Jesus enjoined the repetition of the rite. It is not the Last Supper, it is the Lord's Supper that interests him. Christians are to repeat the feast in memory of the Lord, recalling him to mind as he spoke and acted at this sacred, momentous hour, and, **as often as** they did so, to celebrate it with vivid 26
memories that passed into hope. What is done often may tend to become more or less formal. As the years pass, even the most solemn function may lose something of its thrilling freshness by dint of repetition, unless the worshipper is careful to preserve the spirit of the action. This living spirit in the Christian rite is one of thankfulness and of eternal indebtedness to the Lord. '**As often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup** of the Lord who gave himself for you and gives himself thus to you, you are proclaiming his death till **he comes** back.' The Church crying **Maranatha** testifies to the living, victorious Lord ; it not only waits on him but waits for him. As an apostle, Paul had come to Corinth to **proclaim Jesus Christ the crucified** (ii. 1–2), telling the wonderful story of the Cross (i. 17). So the church had come into being. But the Church itself proclaims this truth by its meeting for worship at the sacred table of the Lord, which is an altar of sacrifice as well as of communion. 'Jesus cut off by human treachery and violence ? No, we glory in his death because it is the beginning of the glad end which he will soon complete in this new, saving order of God. The best hopes of our fathers are more than fulfilled. We celebrate our memorial feast with a forward look.' This testimony to the Lord was not borne directly to the world, for no outsider was permitted to attend the love-feast with its communion service, but it voiced the central convictions that made the Church of God (x. 32, xi. 22) distinct from Jews and

pagans alike. In a real sense it was the heart of the Christian *haggada*, an enacted declaration that their faith and fellowship could not be accounted for except as a creation of the Lord, dying, risen, and returning.

There were, indeed, some partial parallels in contemporary religion. Greek guilds would hold feasts in affectionate remembrance of some departed friend and member once a year. Many Corinthians must have taken part in these celebrations. Even the passover of Israel had its own hope as well as its memory, for by this time, especially if the singing of the Hallel psalms (cxiii.–cxviii.) had already come into vogue, it was not merely a commemoration of the deliverance from Egypt, but an anticipation of some splendid intervention by God in the near future, when Jews would no longer be left under the dominion of pagans. Yet not even the passover was regarded as a special communion feast, as though the eating of the lamb renewed the spiritual life of the people. The bread and wine which followed such eating at the private gatherings in the home, important as they had come to be for the devout in Israel, were not distinctive of the paschal rite, as they were of the Christian festival, where the fare provided by the Host for his guests was his own life and personality. At the Lord's supper, Paul explains, Christians were not simply to remember him as he had been and to look for his return, but to live on him, as it were, to absorb his real spirit, to be sustained in their communion with God through his presence, somehow mediated by partaking of **this loaf** and **this cup**, which really represented him to their faith and love, as visible equivalents of his full, supernatural personality. What was done at the supper was certainly believed to be more than a symbol or mere illustration of fellowship. The rite had numinous power, for punishing as well as for blessing (verses 30 f.). On the other hand, the later notion of consecrated elements is not directly implied in the apostle's language. 'To give thanks' is, indeed, interchangeable with 'to bless,' but an Oriental blessed God who gave the food (x. 30, 1 Tim. iv. 4), not the food itself, which remained the same. Even the so-called **cup of blessing which we bless** (x. 14) was not a cup whose contents were supposed to be thereby hallowed, but one for which special thanks had been given to God on account of its associations in the simple liturgy. Naturally the unique associations of the one loaf and the one cup in the Christian feast led to the development of the consecration idea, especially when the eucharist was detached from the prolonged and more general festivity of the love-feast. But as yet this was not present to the mind of Paul or of his churches.

Now for the application of all this to the immediate situation (18–22). Let them eat the loaf or drink the cup of the 27
Lord **often**, but never **carelessly,** devoid of **a proper sense of the Body.** It is a small but not insignificant point, by the way, that the Greek word for **or** is here, as often (e.g. Rom. i. 21), a semi-copulative, i.e. practically the same as **and** (in 26, 28, 29).
Paul never contemplated anyone being content with a half- 28
communion in **the loaf** of the Lord. The reason he speaks only of **the Body** in verse 29 is that he is now introducing another rich aspect of ‘ Body,’ to bring out the corporate communion about which some of the Corinthians had been so fatally care-
less. Each must **test** (2 Cor. xiii. 5) **himself** on this point, for 28
fear of sacrilege. The genuine (verse 19) communicant must know how to discern the Lord's Body before he can truly
partake, and **the Body** here (an expression which elsewhere, as 29
in Rom. vii. 4, sums up concisely the idea of the body suffering death by the shedding of the blood) specially refers to the unity of the Church as the one Body of the Lord, in which the faithful are incorporated into him, as the apostle had already hinted ; **we are one Bread** or loaf, **one Body, since we all partake of the one Bread** (x. 17). The charge against the irreverent Corinthians is not that they failed to distinguish any consecrated elements in the meal, or that they undervalued the sacrificial side of communion, but that they forgot what **the Body** meant as they acted so selfishly towards their humbler fellow-Christians. Paul reiterates at this point what he had urged in 20 and 21, but in terms now of **the Body.** To participate really in the redeeming sacrifice of the Lord is not only for those who are deeply conscious of their indebtedness to him, but for them only as they are equally conscious that, since they

are his, they are bound over to one another, recognizing in every fellow-communicant **the brother** or sister **for whom Christ died** in his body. To treat any member with cool, self-centred indifference at the Lord's supper is to desecrate **the** sacred **Body** ; it is a sin against Christ himself, as any cavalier behaviour elsewhere is (viii. 12), and it will expose the offender to the same divine punishment as any combination of the communion with a pagan rite of the same kind (x. 22, xi. 30 f.). In giving himself for men, the Lord gave himself to men, as he drew them to God in the common bond of **the new covenant** ; as he drew them to God, he drew them together in **the** one **Body. You are Christ's Body, all of you who are baptized into one Body, imbued with one Spirit** (xii. 13, 27). The deep convictions of xii. f. underlie the apostle's use here of **Body** in this twofold, pregnant sense of the term.

The corporate interpretation was assumed to be natural in verse 27 already, by leading expositors of the Early Church, as by Chrysostom, who expounds that verse : ' Carelessly ? How could it be otherwise, when the man pays no heed to the hungry—worse still, puts him to shame ? ' In fact the preacher sees Paul denouncing the godly who are so inhuman, not only at the celebration, but before they come to it, and even afterwards. This dishonour done to members of the Body is pronounced the damning sin of sacrilege. Pelagius also takes this view as for granted, and illustrates it by referring to the word of Jesus about being reconciled to a brother before presenting any gift at the altar ; a life stained by quarrelling and selfishness is an insult to the Lord, if it dares to approach his table. Augustine's comments on xi. 27 in connexion with love and unity are equally significant for this interpretation of Paul's language (*Serm.* 227, 272). Earlier still, in days when the eucharist could still be called a love-feast, as by Ignatius, the Church-order of the Didache retains this tradition ; not only does the prayer offered over the bread recall the unity of the Church (' as this broken bread was once scattered on the hills and then gathered to become one loaf, so may thy Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom '), but no member is allowed to take part in communion till he has settled any quarrel with a fellow-Christian. Paul, for whom all the divine commands were **summed up in the single word, You must love your neighbour as yourself** (Rom. xiii. 9), and for whom love was even greater than faith and hope, is consistent in holding that a callous breach of fellowship was the most awful sin for Christians, most of all when committed at their love-feast with its sacred communion. The corporate sense of **Body** comes out in verse 29, if not in verses 27 and 28. The idea of turning the communion of the Body into a supper-party for your own set! His profound sense of the collective fellowship throbs in this word on the eucharist, where the genuinely faithful ate and drank in presence of their invisible Host and Head, deeply conscious of his presence, not simply in the actual rite, but in the person of each brother in prayer beside them. The Lord's Body was really represented in what they ate and drank, but not less really in their fellow-Christians, in whom, as well as for whom, the Lord lived. The trouble with the Corinthians was that, just as they enjoyed their 'speaking with tongues,' till they were apt to forget that worship must take account of others in the service, so they were treating the eucharistic love-reunion as though it were a private religious meal for individuals or groups, which did not involve obligations to the rest of the brotherhood. A heinous offence, the apostle protests! The vital sense of solidarity was endangered, he declared, by these irregularities at communion, and for this reason[1] he again (x. 17) turns to the corporate, mystical conception of **the Body** which was inseparable from the other conception and as organic to his gospel, whether or not it was originally prompted by eucharistic associations (p. 162).

Literally the words are, 'he who eats and drinks, eats and 29 drinks judgement for himself, failing to judge the Body' (i.e. to test himself by the standards of what such communion involves); he lays himself open to a judicial sentence of doom, if he has no **proper sense** of what **the Body** means. It is not the

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[1] This interpretation, which I argued in the *Expository Times* (xxx. 19–23), is recognized not only by Schweitzer, but by Dean Armitage Robinson in *Encyclopædia Biblica*, ii. 1421, Anderson Scott in *Christianity According to St. Paul*, pp. 189 f., and G. H. C. Macgregor in *Eucharistic Origins*, pp. 178 f.

final **condemnation** (verse 32), but it may come to that. The rendering of the Greek word for **condemnation** by some equivalent for 'damnation' led to sad though superficial misconceptions, as a well-known passage in Goethe's Autobiography re-
30 cords. Paul certainly takes a most serious view of this flagrant, irreverent selfishness at the Lord's table. At the same time he does not regard it as necessarily fatal to the culprit. Like
31 many Jews,[1] he considered suffering might be a penalty for sin, and premature death a punishment for sin (see Luke xiii. 1–5), but he also shares (v. 5) the Jewish belief that such physical suffering becomes a divine means of discipline for the
32 soul. **We are** being **chastened** by such sufferings, he explains, even though they are a **judgment** of condemnation on our misbehaviour, in order to keep us from sharing the doom of the anti-divine world (i. 8 and 18) when the Lord does come. Paul, it should be noted, does not explain the recent illnesses and deaths at Corinth as the direct result of irreverence in handling the elements. This sub-Christian extension emerged two hundred years later, in the days of Cyprian. But he does believe that if any participated in the festival with unbecoming levity and selfishness, they did more than miss a blessing; they incurred guilt and would have to suffer for a **sin against the body and blood of the Lord,** with whom they had dared to come into real contact as they ate and drank. The damning sin is the lack of perception, blindness to what such communion means. All would be well **if we only judged our own lives truly** at our re-unions, if we but took time and thought to realize how membership in the Body of Christ means that unbrotherli-
33 ness is sacrilege. The self-engrossed, careless member who cannot **wait for** his fellows shows that he judges the feast to be a gratification of appetites or of social interests, not a fellowship meal of the spirit. Unless the man can be brought to his senses, that irreverent attitude, Paul ends as he began by

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[1] Rabbi Jose the Galilean, not long after Paul, applied this tradition to Israel's infidelity at the worship of the golden calf (Midrash Sifre on Num. v. 1): 'Come and see the awful effect of sin. Before the crime of the golden calf, there were no issues of blood, no cases of leprosy, in Israel; but as soon as they sinned, these diseases sprang up among them.' See below, p. 253.

declaring, leads to his condemnation, as surely as it did with the fathers long ago, who ignored their Christ (x. 4–11, 22).

He ends quietly, on a hopeful note, the contrast of which 33
with the tone of 20–23 recalls the similar change of accent in
x. 12, 13, after a preceding warning. His authoritative **instruc-** 34
tions on other details will be given by word of mouth when he arrives. Instead of continuing what he had begun **first of all** (verse 18) to lay down by way of injunctions about Church services, he defers the rest of the subject.

There is no reason why this should not refer to the visit indicated in iv. 21, as if the present allusion implied a less serious state of things. In iv. 18 f. his tone is indeed more threatening, but this is because he had in mind some local upstarts or interlopers who insinuated that Paul had been away for so long—for four years now—that he would never come back. 'No fear of him interfering with us! He's afraid to put in an appearance. We can go on with our superior rules for the community.' But the difference is one of tone, not of time. Here he views the situation more calmly, because it is a different situation. Like the observation in verse 19, this gives no sure ground for conjecturing that it comes from some letter which was written before that in which iv. 18 f. occurred. Even by the time he wrote xvi. 10, 11, he saw no immediate reason for crossing at once; indeed he intimates that he must first visit his Macedonian churches. In the circumstances, he still believes that a visit from his young colleague Timotheus will be sufficient for the time being. As in iv. 18 f. and xvi. 10 f., so here; the Corinthians must take this letter as a reply to the more urgent of their questions, till he himself has time to come over and settle matters on the spot. Such is the general situation as he begins and ends the letter. It was not until after he had despatched it that he had to alter his plans and pay a hurried visit to Corinth.

But one topic was, for some reason or another, of such pressing importance that it could not be left over till he arrived in person; it was the question of **spiritual gifts** in Church work and worship, their relative importance and their proper exercise.

THE CHURCH AS A FELLOWSHIP OF WORSHIP
(xii.–xiv.)

In discussing worship (xi. 2–34) he had already found occasion to stress fellowship and cohesion, as endangered by local faults of the church. But they were also endangered by the church's sheer vitality. Hitherto it might seem as though the saints at Corinth formed a rather unsaintly specimen of Christianity, little more than a swarming group of excited partisans or self-conceited religionists, composed for the most part of high-flying ascetics and of easy-going worshippers who in different ways sat strangely loose to morals, while some were allowing the new sense of freedom to degenerate into captious criticism or even into compromising habits. But Paul knew his dear people better (iv. 14, x. 14, xv. 58). They were richly endowed with enthusiasm and eager spiritual aims. He could still thank God for them, in spite of all that he had to say since he wrote i. 4–9. Whatever were their failings, a Laodicean temper was not one of them. He knew that many had earnestly set their hearts on the highest achievements and experiences possible to a Christian (xiv. 1, 12). One expression of this was the very ascetic passion of which he had spoken with high approval, though with some cautious reservations (in vii.). Another was the ambition to shine in ecstatic trances and transports of the devotional life, or in distinguished positions like those of prophets, teachers, and miracle-workers, so inspired by the Spirit that they stood out from their fellows and stood close to God himself. Indeed some were identifying the activity of the Spirit with such abnormal manifestations as speech in 'tongues' and thrilling raptures. If these were not experienced, they had an uneasy feeling that they were somehow deserted by God, or at any rate left on a low level of religion. Not all craved rhetoric or religious debates on 'wisdom.' There was a ferment of spiritual life in the worship of the community; it often burned and seethed with enthusiasm, which was accompanied by less rapturous intervals. Accesses of supernatural power came and went, came to some at least, in wonderful phases and phenomena of possession. The mobile, susceptible Corinthians were fascinated by all this, fascinated and puzzled, apt to attach too much importance to the intermittent, exciting elements of their religion and to miss God's Spirit in the less romantic experiences of human helpfulness, thoughtful service, and brotherly kindness in the fellowship. To free them from such misapprehensions, the apostle now recalls them to the Origin and Object of all spiritual endowments. He turns to the more hopeful side of the church's life with relief as well as with some concern, after the graver issues which had engaged him since he began to write in i. 10 f. If to be 'in Christ' meant anything to Paul, it meant a break with the selfish 'ego' whose domination was the ruin of human nature. He had occasion to speak of some rather gross relapses into this selfish absorption, in the earlier chapters. Now he needs to expose a further risk of it within the very fellowship as the saints met for worship, and though he treats this as seriously he handles the temptations with less severity. The exuberant activity of the fellowship is welcome to him; for all its risks of misunderstanding and friction, it means vitality in the sphere of the Spirit or common faith.

The survey has three sections—xii. 1–30, xii. 31–xiv. 1, and xiv. 2–40. In dictating them he was evidently less interrupted than he had been; there are no sudden breaks in the discussion.

The keynote is struck by the word **spiritual gifts** in xii. 1. The Greek term might refer to **spiritual** persons, gifted with the Spirit (as in xiv. 37), i.e. specially receptive to the inspiring control of supernatural power. In the contemporary world of religious fervour (xiv. 12 and 2, Acts xvi. 16), with its animistic background, this spirit or that was believed to possess a susceptible votary. The supernatural sphere was full of 'spirits.' But in view of xiv. 1, the likelihood is that the word here denotes **spiritual gifts**, on which verses 1–11 are an introductory statement.

xii.

But I want you to understand about spiritual gifts, brothers. 1
(You know, when you were pagans, how your impulses led 2

3 you to dumb idols ; so I tell you now, that no one is speaking in the Spirit of God when he cries, 'Cursed be Jesus,' and that no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' except in the holy Spirit.)

4 There are varieties of talents,
but the same Spirit ;
5 varieties of service,
but the same Lord ;
6 varieties of effects,
but the same God who effects everything in everyone.

7 Each receives his manifestation of the Spirit for the common
8 good. One man is granted words of wisdom by the Spirit,
9 another words of knowledge by the same Spirit ; one man
in the same Spirit has the gift of faith, another in the one
10 Spirit has gifts of healing, one has miraculous powers,
another prophecy, another the gift of distinguishing
spirits, another the gift of 'tongues' in their variety,
11 another the gift of interpreting 'tongues.' But all these
effects are produced by one and the same Spirit, apportioning them severally to each individual as he pleases.

1 What Paul desires the Corinthians to **understand** is the
common source and aim of **spiritual** endowments in the
Church. But 'that reminds me, to begin with, of a truth under-
2 lying all such manifestations of the Spirit. Those of you who
were brought up as **pagans** are familiar with the frenzied cries
of the cults. You know the religious impulses that once swept
you into seances where devotees had their experience of divine
possession.' With a Jew's scorn, he calls the cult-gods **dumb**
idols, though it is not very relevant here, if these deities excited
3 their worshippers to scream aloud. 'Well, no dumb idols for
us, but a living Lord ! We Christians, you and I, are moved
by the holy Spirit. As no one is really inspired when he shouts,
"**Cursed be Jesus !**" in the synagogue, so no one in the
Church can utter the confession, "**Jesus is Lord,**" unless he is
inspired by that Spirit. This is the spiritual gift of gifts. To
be a Christian at all, apart from any question of spiritual endowments or special capacities, the Spirit is essential.' The

simplest explanation of the reference to Jesus being **cursed,** is that some Corinthians may have been impressed, almost against their better judgement, by hearing a member of the local synagogue (next door to the Corinthian meeting-house, Acts xviii. 7) crying in rapt, passionate tones, as though he were inspired, 'Your Jesus is no Christ! God's curse be on him!' It is indeed possible that the reference may be to an incoherent outburst in some *glossolalia* cry, as the man unconsciously screamed a phrase caught up from his normal experience. Such a phenomenon is not uncommon in hysteria or in the babbling of patients under a drug, when sub-consciously they utter things quite out of keeping with their real selves. It would be one function of those who interpreted *glossolalia* to declare, as Paul does here (see further on xvi. 22), that such an exclamation from the possessed person is not characteristic and does not represent his Christian standing. But a more natural account of this perplexing allusion is to trace it to the tension between the Church and the outside world, especially Judaism, as one of the cries which Paul himself had once endeavoured to force from the lips of sympathizers with Jesus in the synagogue, when he did what he could to **force them to blaspheme** (Acts xxvi. 11). 'Jesus the Son of God? What blasphemy! This crucified pretender divine?' To Jews such a claim on the part of the Church was **a stumbling-block** (i. 23). It horrified them. Hence their indignant protest against the scandalous witness to the Lord which Christians uttered. But Paul retorts, in this reminder to the Corinthians, that only the Spirit of the Lord had overcome the prejudices of Jew or pagan to the gospel of Jesus Christ the crucified Lord. In declaring that **no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except in** possession of **the holy Spirit,** he is not contrasting genuine faith with any formal lip-loyalty; he means that this saving testimony to Christ springs from God revealing it by the Spirit (ii. 10). Our faith, he implies, is ultimately due, not to any religious **impulses** of our own, but to the enlightening power of **the holy,** divine **Spirit** of the true God. The really supernatural influence in this world of ours lies not with dæmons, but with the Lord, and it is as we yield to the impulses of God's own Spirit, as we are under the influence of the Spirit of God, that we call **Jesus Lord** as we call **God the Father** (viii. 6). Some Corinthians may have been led to consider that the more ecstatic a cry was, the more it was inspired. Paul's reminder is that genuine inspiration from the supernatural order voices itself in the conscious confession of **Jesus** as **Lord**, and that this is neither self-induced nor reached by mere reflection or insight of our own. It is also implied that the inspiring Spirit of God is now to be verified and experienced in the Church (ii. 10–12, iii. 16) rather than even in the synagogue of Israel, just as the Church rejoices in the possession of prophets (10, 28), men in the direct succession of those who are inspired by God to speak for him at certain moments to the community.

4 After this characteristic (see viii. 5, 6) parenthesis, he comes to his immediate point, using for the first time **service** or ministry (iii. 5, xvi. 15), of which so much is made in Second Corinthians, and **effects** or operations, which he never uses again. All the capacities which appear in Christian service, even what seem to be the more brilliant **talents,** are endowments, literally gifts of grace (i. 7, vii. 7, a rare word which he re-stamps) ; all are alike from God. They have relative importance, but all are vitally relevant to the interests of the community, and none, not even *glossolalia* with its transports, is to be regarded as of exclusive value. In their rich variety these energies (ii. 4) spring from a single Source, assigned or distributed by one and **the same Spirit,** i.e. God's presence and
5 pressure upon the life of his saints. **The Lord is the Spirit** (as in 2 Cor. iii. 17) ; as Calvin points out, the term is not to be
6 exclusively applied to Christ. God as **Lord** is served by his people. All the **effects** or activities (**powers** in 10) produced by the exercise of spiritual gifts are his doing, whether striking
7 or commonplace. **Each** member **receives his** particular **manifestation of the Spirit,** and receives it **for the common good,** not for self-enjoyment or self-display. Not even for his individual advantage, as the English Version ' to profit withal ' might suggest. Religion is a final thing ; it is man's relationship to God, not something that is to bring something else, though as it is real it is the beginning of anything that is to be of service

to the man himself or to others. Here the 'profit' is **the common good** of the community, within which alone the relationship ripens. However, before developing this thought, Paul mentions some of the uncommon varieties in this nexus of service and fellowship.

The first two are connected with that power of speaking 8
intelligently about the faith which he had hailed as a characteristic of the local church (i. 6). No Greek would have drawn any distinction between **words of wisdom** and **words of knowledge,** and it is not easy to understand how Paul differentiated Christian wisdom from knowledge of God ; in view of ii. 6 f. and xiii. 2, the former cannot be identified with religious instruction, which in the sense of illumination and insight may rather belong to **knowledge,** i.e. access to the inner sphere of truth which is hidden from the senses and mere reason.
Similarly **faith, healing,** and **miraculous powers** form a special 9
group of endowments, which run into one another. **Faith** (as in xiii. 2) is heroic belief in the supernatural, an indomitable assurance that God can overcome any difficulties and meet any emergencies (Matt. xvii. 19 f.). With some this rises to special heights ; as Bunyan remarks of Great-Grace, the King's strong fighter, who rallied faint-hearted followers and routed misgivings, 'all the King's subjects are not his champions.' Such unswerving confidence in God underlay those who did what were regarded as miraculous cures. One sphere in which it worked variously was that of sickness. While the important **healing** ministry, which often worked through prayer (Acts xxviii. 8) and unction (Mark vi. 13, Jas. v. 14 f.), was originally distinct from exorcisms with their expulsion of some dæmon whose invasion of the body had caused sickness (according to
contemporary belief), the latter may come under **miraculous** 10
powers, which would include also raising dead people. The effectiveness of this gift covered a wide range, indicated by the passing allusion in Gal. iii. 5 to God **who supplies you with the Spirit and works miracles** (or mighty deeds) **among you.** Such achievements in the mission-field, such marvellous results of faith in individual lives, were obviously not the prerogative of apostles, but spiritual functions open to any members of the

Church who had the gift. To prevent misconception it should be explained that Paul wrote what is literally ‘ active **powers,**’ not “ miracles ’ in our modern sense of the term ; but ‘ power ’ (*dunamis*) had acquired this special meaning of supernatural energy, for which our most adequate adjective is **miraculous** (i. 25, ii. 5).

The next four describe another form of utterance. The prophetic gift, characteristic of those who expounded the mind of God, meant revelations of present duty and of future prospects, by which they were inspired to **fathom all mysteries and secret lore** (xiii. 2), to show how Jesus was Lord, and to bring out the inner force and truth of the gospel. Some of these functions are visible in the later description of worship (xiv.), where they are ranked higher than **tongues.** The gift of **distinguishing** true utterances of those who addressed the Church from false statements, when some spirit of error possessed the seer, is partly that already mentioned (verse 3). Paul implies that these outpourings are not to be accepted blindly as infallible revelations. He had had occasion already to warn some Christians at Thessalonica against despising them as silly vapouring, whether they referred to the future or to directions for immediate guidance. That would be to **quench the fire of** God's **Spirit** by pouring the cold water of unsympathetic criticism on some glowing soul. Nevertheless, while such prophetic revelations were to be deeply respected, they ought to be tested by Christians, some of whom should know how to retain the good element while they set aside the trivial or dæmonic (1 Thess. v. 19 f.). The Church is not to lie at the mercy of any ranter or unbalanced enthusiast. There is a spiritual gift of discernment. A later illustration of this capacity is Wesley's treatment of the French prophets and the Jumpers in Wales. Paul means no sceptical attitude towards an ardent speaker, but an acute perception of spiritual reality and integrity, which enables some in the gathering to detect the line at which an earnest speaker allowed his own emotions or prejudices to enter into the truth of his message. This gift, open to many in the Church, might seem less useful than that of lyric rapture or oratory, but Paul insists that it is as much a

function of the fellowship as any other. Similarly with the
phenomenon of **tongues.** Even this required interpreters;
otherwise its service to **the common good** would be missing.
What a variety of energies and effects!—some apparently 11
more sensational than others, some attracting attention and
others operating in humbler spheres, some cool and some
ecstatic, some more mental than others, but all produced by
one and the same Spirit, none the mere result of independent
choice or of unconsecrated ability.

Paul had begun by speaking of the Spirit as the dividing line between Church and the world; the Spirit by which the faithful are moved to confess Jesus as Lord marked the difference between them and all others in their environment. But within the Church the Spirit is the uniting power, which overcomes all differences of temperament and education and endowment, not obliterating them, but combining them in a common, co-operative service of the fellowship. Hence it is not an intermittent power, not even an *esprit de corps*, but a constant source of health and vitality in **the Body.** The gifts of the Spirit are not the native powers and capacities of human nature; although these enter into the particular endowments of individual Christians in the fellowship, they are taken up into the new life and heightened; fresh, unsuspected capacities are also evoked. Yet all bear upon **the common good,** and all derive their value from love, disinterested devotion to the good of others within the community. To illustrate this truth, he now reverts to his characteristic conception of the Church as **the Body** of Christ (12–27).

With their strong sense of Roman ways and traditions in politics, the Corinthians would appreciate this particular argument, for one of the famous stories in Roman history embodied a similar appeal on behalf of the body politic. In 494 B.C., when the plebeians seceded from Rome, an envoy from the city authorities persuaded the rebellious commons to rejoin the State by telling them, according to Livy, a quaint apologue of how once upon a time the members of the body had a grievance against the belly because it 'did nothing but enjoy what they bestowed upon it'; they struck work, but soon found that they were really starving themselves. Which made it clear to them that even the belly (i.e. the patrician order) nourished the other members, while it was being nourished by them. This adroit argument of Menenius Agrippa, familiar to most English readers through Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, illustrates one of the points made by Paul in the following passage, with its telling, local appeal to the Latin sense of order.

For Paul it is no simile but a spiritual reality, this Body of Christ. Whether or not the Christian Sunday came to be called the Lord's Day because the Lord's Supper was observed then, the corporate sense of the Body either arose out of the communion feast or was closely associated with it (see above, p. 172). It is not a mere literary coincidence that this stress on the Body of Christ as the Church confessing him, in communion with God and with one another, follows the statement on the sacramental rite. Any divisive temper, any failure to think more of others than of oneself, any carelessness about recognizing what each owes to the others (in the double sense of indebtedness), is marked as a breach of vital communion, whether at the love-feast or elsewhere in the worship and work of the Lord (xv. 58). Such aberrations are deliberately discussed here in the light of the Church as the corporate Body, into which the faithful are incorporated **by the one Spirit,** not rendered thereby independent of fellowship, as though the Spirit were a vague, kindly disposition in the personal life of each. So far from the gifts of the Spirit being, in our modern sense of the term, ' spiritual ' in contrast to definite ties and obligations of belief and membership, Paul insists that they belong to the **one Body,** just as he invariably speaks of **the saints** in the plural. The confession that **Jesus is Lord** is indeed personal, but the Spirit inspiring it is the Spirit which places each member in a Body where all are mutually dependent. The Spirit, to put it otherwise, is not identified with what the devout soul does with his loneliness, much less with religious self-expression, but with what each is and does for the fellowship. In fact, as it had **pleased** God to create the individual man with a body of many members, so he had been **pleased,** in his sovereign providence, to create the Church as the corporate

Body of Christ (verses 11 and 18), for exercising the divine Spirit of mutual service. A bodiless man, in other words, would be as vital and no more than a Churchless Christ.

As the human body is one and has many members, all the 12
members of the body forming one body for all their number,
so is it with Christ. For by one Spirit we have all been 13
baptized into one Body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or freemen;
we have all been imbued with one Spirit. Why, even the 14
body consists not of one member but of many. If the foot 15
were to say, 'Because I am not the hand, I do not belong
to the body,' that does not make it no part of the body. If 16
the ear were to say, 'Because I am not the eye, I do not
belong to the body,' that does not make it no part of the
body. If the body were all eye, where would hearing be? 17
If the body were all ear, where would smell be? As it is, 18
God has set the members in the body, each as it pleased him.
If they all made up one member, what would become of the 19
body? As it is, there are many members and one body. 20
The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' 21
nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'
Quite the contrary. We cannot do without those very 22
members of the body which are considered rather delicate,
just as the parts we consider rather dishonourable are the 23
very parts we invest with special honour; our indecorous
parts get a special care and attention which does not need to 24
be paid to our more decorous parts. Yes, God has tempered
the body together, with a special dignity for the inferior
parts, so that there may be no disunion in the body, but 25
that the various members should have a common concern
for one another. Thus 26

if one member suffers,
all the members share its suffering;
if one member is honoured,
all the members share its honour.

Now you are Christ's Body, and severally members of it. 27

The literal 'so also is Christ' misses the force of the Greek 12 idiom, which here (as in xv. 42) means **so is it with Christ.** In his later teaching the apostle speaks of Christ as the Head of the Body, moving and inspiring the Church. This appears first in the Colossian letter. Here, and in the twelfth chapter of Romans, the Church is the **Body of Christ,** a corporate organism, with the many members acting for the common good of vital health and energy. There is no anticipation of this symbol in any philosophical school or cult. To some Corinthians the general idea, indeed, would not be wholly unfamiliar; in popular Stoicism, for example, the true man was instructed to regard himself as a member of the universe, co-operating with his fellows. This was no figurative symbol; there was an actual rhythm in the cosmos, setting the members to service. 'Nature,' said Seneca (*Ep.* xcv. 52), has made us all kin, 'members of a great Body,' with social ties. Epictetus (ii. 10) explained, almost in Paul's very words, that 'the calling of a citizen of the world is to have no private interest, never to view anything as if he were detached, but to act like the hand or the foot, which, did they possess reason, would never stir or start except with reference to the whole.' But, while there are some instances of **body** being used in pre-Christian Greek for a society, Paul is the first thinker in Greek to develop this idea of the Body, which, as we have already seen, is so vital to his conception of religious communion as a corporate experience.

13 He never contemplates any baptism of the Spirit as a higher experience of Christians. Their baptism into the Church is through the Spirit; **we have all been imbued** (or, saturated) **with one Spirit,** the indwelling Spirit (ii. 12, vi. 19) at the solemn, decisive moment of baptism (vi. 11). **Jews or Greeks, slaves or freemen,** is not so apposite here as it is elsewhere, in Galatians and Colossians. But as he thought of the unity of the Church, into which every member had been incorporated, his favourite thought rushed into his mind, the more so, since he had been speaking not only about Jews and Greeks (x. 32), but about slaves and freeborn (vii. 20 f.) within the local fellowship. His primary idea, however, is not of the Church embracing people of any nation or of any social rank, but of
14 the differences of function within the unity. All are needed by

each, and each is needed by all. It is so in the physical organism. Yes, he concludes, using a verb which Stoics employed for the divine ' compounding ' of the universe, **God has** 24
tempered the body together, with a special regard for the less imposing parts. Members who had no conspicuous gifts must not imagine that they were sub-spiritual or unnecessary to the life of the community. The fear of this, no less than of distinguished leaders giving themselves airs, perhaps even of individual prophets believing that they could discharge most if not all of the requisite functions, haunts the apostle as he writes. It was for him one of the factors that made for **disunion.**
For the third and the last time, this ill-omened word sounds in 25
the ears of the church, as their apostle hints how unnatural it is. There is a remarkable anticipation of the next sentence
in Plato's *Republic* (v. 462), as he argues that the best body 26
politic is one where the entire body of the citizens shares the happiness or the suffering of each member : ' The best ordered polity resembles an individual. For example, if one of our fingers is hurt, the entire community of the physical organism feels the pain as a whole, although it is only one part that suffers. So we say, a man has pain in his finger.' This was nearer to Paul's view of the Christian Body than any Stoic ideal of the collective spirit which linked the individual to the body of the cosmos. The ideal man of Stoicism might, and, indeed, must, try to serve a fellow-member of humanity, but he must never allow any emotion like pity or sympathy to ruffle his august soul ; he was no isolated unit, and yet he was debarred from the warmth of personal devotion which Paul expresses by brotherly love as the breath of membership within the Body.

This is the third exposition (see on vi. 20) of ' body ' in our epistle, and it is organic to the second (in xi. 29 f.). The originality of Paul's conception does not lie in the extension of ' body ' from the individual self to an organism, but in the conception of the Church as the collective **Body of Christ.** It is in line with his representation of the heavenly Man, who has not merely died for his own, but already lives in them, as they in him (xv. 49 f.), heading a new order of created human beings. There is no clear evidence to show any dependence of Paul, even indirectly, upon the cosmic corporate idea which is embodied in some pre-Christian gnostic theosophies of the Primal Man and Redeemer. These furnish no more than casual parallels. He is rather in line with the working of the Hebrew mind, which readily personified the divine community, as in the psalms. The anticipations of his view are to be found in apocalyptic mysticism, with its conception of a solidarity between the elect and their messiah ; the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant of the Lord were readily associated with a transcendent, corporate idea of the saints. Jesus himself (see above, p. 164) had forecast not only the fact but the vicarious and representative significance of his sufferings and death, as the primitive tradition witnessed. For the apostle, what was vital was not the Lord as a heroic individual ; it was Christ dying and rising as One who bore in his own person the destiny of God's chosen People, Christ living as the Lord and Spirit in whom they actually shared and reproduced his death and resurrection within their own experience. That is, interpreting the evangelic tradition, he now gave it a new expression, suggested by ethnic thought. The Hebrew mind never used ' body ' for its ideas of corporate life. But, for Paul, Christians are bound up with their Christ in what, for lack of a better term, we sometimes call, ' the mystical Body.' It was only mystical as it was a supernatural or spiritual reality, a corporate personality, in which the saints together shared his sufferings as well as already, to some degree, his risen glory. There is more than half a truth in Dr. Schweitzer's contention[1] that the so-called ' mysticism ' of Paul really amounts to his statement of the truth that the pre-existent Church is manifested in appearance and reality through the death and resurrection of Jesus. In xi. 23 f. the apostle brings this out in its eschatological aspect, by indicating how on the basis of the covenant the Body of Christ came into positive existence on earth during the interval before the End. Here he is dealing with its functions and inward vitality as the religious fellowship of God's called people, vitally bound up with the person of their divine Deliverer, alive with the energies of his Spirit. Yet, even so, the Christian view of the Body is never apart from the conviction of God's ultimate purpose for the world. The Stoic cosmopolitanism lacked any sense of a divine event, near or remote, to which the creation was moving; its corporate spirit had nothing corresponding to the Reign of God or saving purpose to be realized at the End through the divine organism of the Church or Body. The significance of history, past and future, for the Christian fellowship of hope, had no place in the Stoic's idea of his cosmic Body. It is the limitations of the very ethnic thought on which Paul here draws which are so striking.

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[1] *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, p. 116.

Baptism did imply this incorporation, as it rested upon the life and death and resurrection of the Lord. Though Paul speaks of being baptized 'with Christ,' he can say, **By one Spirit have we all been baptized into one Body.** Yet, in the nature of the case, baptism was individual as the other sacrament of the Body, communion at the eucharist, was not. To immerse oneself in the water and undergo a mystic death and resurrection to a new life, or, as Paul put it otherwise, to take on the personality of Christ (Gal. iii. 27), suggested personal surrender, once and for all, to the Lord, even when several were baptized together; whereas the corporate side of this union was presented more directly and intelligibly by the repeated rite of the common meal. Paul could indeed speak of the crucified body as the Lord's **mortal body,** literally 'the body of his flesh' (Col. i. 22, so Rom. vii. 4), no less than of his saving blood (Rom. v. 9, 10, iii. 25), the latter representing, in ancient terminology, the principle and power of the life here sacrificed in the body for others. But, even so (as in 1 Cor. xi. 24–29) the corporate idea was never far from his mind, 'corporate' meaning not only incorporation into him, but vital union with one another in the sacred fellowship. For Christians who had not been trained in Hebrew traditions, **body** thus was a more vivid and appealing symbol of solidarity and cohesion than **covenant,** especially as it was capable of
being expounded in terms of life depending upon a variety of 27
functions.

'I said that **God** had **set the members** in the physical **body**, each with its own function. **Now you are members of Christ's** spiritual **body**. Which means that there is the same variety of functions' (28–30).

28 **That is, God has set people within the church to be first of all apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, and**
29 **speakers in 'tongues' of various kinds. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of**
30 **miracles? Are all endowed with the gifts of healing? Are all able to speak in 'tongues'? Are all able to interpret?**

28 The order is not strictly one of importance any more than above, for '**tongues**' is ranged by Paul not far below prophecy (xiv. 2 f.); neither is it clear that all these functions or offices, however informal, were represented at Corinth. When Orientals enumerated several things or persons, they often spoke of the first three especially (e.g. Gen. xxxii. 19, Matt. xxii. 25). **Apostles, prophets,** and **teachers** were outstanding figures in primitive Christianity, although this particular triad does not happen to occur elsewhere, not even in the nearest approach to it (Eph. iv. 11–12). In the list of Rom. xii. 6–8 Paul passes from abstract terms to persons. It is the reverse here. For some reason, perhaps because no personal terms were available, the next five functions, introduced by **then,** are put impersonally, though the first four apply to personal, practical services such as lending a hand in charity or relief and management of the society. It is not accidental that five of the entire list are connected with spoken testimony or counsel as the sphere in which personality was effective, and that the episcopal presbyters who managed churches elsewhere, and, indeed, appeared soon at Corinth itself, are only implied, if they are implied at all, in **administrators** (xvi. 16).

While all functions are vital to the health of the Body, some are **higher** than others, as the apostle has already hinted. But, before proceeding to distinguish between the higher and the lower, he dictates (xii. 31–xiv. 1) a thrilling hymn upon brotherly love. Hitherto love has been barely mentioned except as love to God (ii. 9, viii. 3) or in the case of his own affection for the Corinthians (iv. 14, 21, x. 14). Now he dilates upon it as the supreme method for life in the community; it is still higher than any of the talents, since without love even the best of these is of no value, and, also, since love outlasts them all. Furthermore this brotherly love is no attainment for certain highly gifted souls, but an obligation for all members of the Body (xvi. 14).

The lyric may have been already composed in whole or part by Paul; in any case it suits the present context admirably. As in the case of all great literature, it is prosaic to wonder how much is due to the unpremeditated art of deep insight. The opening stanza (xiii. 1–3) is more rhythmical than what follows; though it is absurd to parse a lyric, yet this piece does move through a sequence of thought, and its first phase is a triple word on love as an absolutely essential quality for the exercise of any spiritual gift whatsoever. This is linked to the introductory sentences in prose.

Set your heart on the higher talents. And yet I will go on to 31
show you a still higher path. Thus xiii.
I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, 1
but if I have no love,
I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal;
I may prophesy, fathom all mysteries and secret lore, 2
I may have such absolute faith that I can move hills
from their place,
but if I have no love,
I count for nothing;
I may distribute all I possess in charity, 3
I may give up my body to be burnt,
but if I have no love,
I make nothing of it.

While all talents are endowments, determined by the 31 character of the individuals in question, one Christian may advance to a **higher** gift by due exercise of his original endowment. It is a legitimate ambition to **set** one's **heart** on such a gift as prophecy (xiv. 39) in particular. Nature is not a fixed quantity; within certain limits a man may improve himself and so qualify for nobler functions than he at first was appointed to discharge. Paul refers, in passing, to this enlargement of capacity, after his remarks in xii. 27 f., in order to remove any misconception on the point. **And yet,** he adds, here is the Way of ways which all must tread, whatever be their gifts, the *sine qua non* of any function, high or low, within the Body, the supreme **path** or method for gaining and exercising even the higher talents.

xiii. Paul does not say that love is the greatest thing in the world, but that it is the greatest gift and power in the Church. Without it, nothing avails; the most effective talents go for nothing, if they are used with a spirit of self-display or with disregard for others (1–3). Here, as throughout the lyric, he employs the first person when he has to speak of possible
1 defects—a characteristic note of humble courtesy. The tom-tom noise of **gongs** or tambourines was a familiar accompaniment of some pagan rites and processions at Corinth, much used by the Dionysus cult and by the votaries of Cybele. Speaking 'in tongues,' even with angelic words such as some rabbis liked to think were granted to exalted spirits, is no better (xiv. 6 f.), if it makes a man absorbed in himself and indifferent
2 to his fellow-worshippers. So with prophecy and knowledge. **Mysteries** (as in xiv. 2, **divine secrets**) is almost literal, and the 'knowledge' of the English Versions is equivalent to **secret lore** of the supernatural order (xii. 8), including the theoretical knowledge of Christian principles which Paul had found so uncharitable (ch. viii.). Even the **absolute faith** (xii. 9, Matt. xxi. 21) which, in working for others, gets things done that seemed impossible, may make a man engrossed with his own singular effectiveness or possessed by some domineering spirit which is impatient and overbearing. Paul comes back to this
3 in xvi. 14. Meantime he proceeds to a gift which is also practical and, on the surface, utterly unselfish, but which nevertheless may be spoiled by egotism and a lack of consideration for

others ; this is **charity** in its technical sense of care for the poor and needy. To **distribute in charity** is the very word used in Rom. xii. 20 for **feed,** and Paul knew how his colleague Barnabas had, in genuine love, sold possessions for the benefit of the starving. Elsewhere he pleads for liberality in such contributions (e.g. Rom. xii. 8, 2 Cor. viii.–ix.) ; here he is warning Christians against the subtle, fatal flaw of ostentation, even in the further case of facing, for the sake of Christ's cause, what Chrysostom calls ' the most terrible of all deaths, to be burned alive.' Paul's phrase about **giving up one's body to be burnt** echoes the language of his Greek Bible in Dan. iii. 28. One may actually be a martyr and **make nothing of it,** i.e. if one is posing as a hero or thinking of merit and personal credit !

The last illustration of conspicuous achievement is so sudden and daring that some have thought the words must refer to another form of ardent devotion to others, along the line of charity. As the margin of the R.V. indicates, there is early evidence (from the second century onwards) that, instead of **to be burnt,** some texts read ' that I may glory.' The change is very slight, *kauchêsomai* for *kauthêsomai* ; indeed it is not unexampled, for some MSS. of 2 Sam. xxiii. 7 in the Greek Bible also changed *kauthêsontai* into *kauchêsontai.* The phrase would then be, ' I may distribute all I possess in charity, and even give up my body, that I may glory ' ; the allusion being to an enthusiastic Christian who might allow himself to be sold into slavery in order to gain funds for the release or the support of some poor fellow-believers. This may sound incredible, but by the end of the century Clement of Rome (see above, p. xxx.) can point proudly to ' many among ourselves who have given up themselves to bondage in order to ransom others—many who have given up themselves to slavery, providing food ' (the same verb as **distribute** here) ' for others with the money received for themselves ' (lv. 2). That is, if ' among ourselves ' refers to us Christians and not to us Romans (for the paragraph had begun by quoting pagan instances of self-sacrifice as a stimulus and challenge to Christians). Paul's point would then be that even this form of self-sacrifice, at so terrible a cost, is spoiled by any ostentatious spirit. Such a view is at first sight plausible. Yet a reference to voluntary slavery is on the whole unlikely, even if the burning of the body is supposed, as it is by some, to mean no more than this, for branding with hot irons was not an invariable mark of slavery in the empire. And it surely goes without saying that such a pharisaic self-display, with a motive or consideration of personal credit, is loveless; to add, **but if I have no love,** sounds like an anticlimax, and would be superfluous. Possibly the change from *kauthêsomai* to *kauchêsomai* was due to a feeling in the persecution period that the original text seemed to slight some martyrs, or to the prosaic idea (see on xv. 51) that Paul had not been so martyred himself. It is more difficult to imagine why the reverse change should occur. Martyrdom by burning had been familiar to Jews from the Maccabean period onwards (Dan. iii. 28, Heb. xi. 34). Besides, the illustration of self-sacrifice carried a local allusion, for one of the sights at Achaian Athens, which Paul himself must have seen, was the tomb of an Indian fanatic whose public suicide had caused a sensation throughout Greece and Italy during the reign of Augustus. This Buddhist or Brahmin enthusiast, who belonged to a political deputation from India had 'jumped on the burning pyre, with a smile' (Strabo, xv. 1), burning himself alive; it was not to do good to anyone except himself, but because he feared the prolonging of life might abate his present health and enjoyment. 'Burned for a boast!' said the shrewd Romans and Greeks, who saw nothing in this religious suicide except an extreme form of egoism (Dio Cassius, liv. 9), or, as moderns would say, a case of exhibitionism. There were other examples of this studied martyrdom, some of which are collected in Dr. F. J. Dölger's essay in *Antike und Christentum* (i. 254–270). The sense of the whole stanza is that while God loveth a cheerful giver, he requires an unselfish giver; in giving, all is spoiled, even in the most generous forms of human devotion, even in self-immolation itself, if one allows oneself to dwell on the thought of some merit or reward to be received from God or man.

The rhythmical style alters here, but not the lyrical tone. Like Thomas Aquinas and Abelard, like Luther and even

Wesley, Paul was a theologian who had a vein of poetry, and this runs through the following paragraph on love at work in spheres of brotherhood (4–8) where special spiritual gifts did not directly come into play. It is not an exhaustive sketch of the subject ; active energies and practical ministries of love, such as care for the sick and the poor, are noted elsewhere. Here Paul is dealing with what he knew from the inside, the homely, severe tests of love which occur in the human intercourse of a small and rather miscellaneous religious group, particularly over two features of the life which throws men and women together, offering them rare opportunities of proving their common devotion and yet often either driving them apart or producing a clash of personal feeling. Indeed we have only to reverse the sayings of this paragraph in order to discover the party-spirit and class-feeling against which the apostle has been already protesting.

Love is very patient, very kind. Love knows no jealousy ; 4
love makes no parade, gives itself no airs, is never rude, 5
never selfish, never irritated, *never resentful* ; **love is never** 6
glad when others go wrong, love is gladdened by goodness,
always slow to expose, always eager to believe the best, 7
always hopeful, always patient. Love never disappears. 8

Love is **patient** ; this is the first and the last word upon it in 4 the survey. It is the crucial test and proof of love that it is long-suffering, able to stand any strain put upon it by human intercourse. But **very patient** at the beginning is broader than **patient** at the close ; with **very kind,** it breathes the divine quality (Rom. ii. 4) of a rich affection that is unwavering in its devotion to others, neither discouraged by their failures nor bitter over their ingratitude and dullness. Shrewd it may be and must be, but never snappy or hasty or inconsiderate. Paul had already noted this **good-temper** and **kindliness** among the fruits ripened by the Spirit in Christian fellowship, for the two nouns in Gal. v. 22 (as in Col. iii. 12) correspond to the verbs here.

The first occasion of strain (*a*), which is apt to stir bad feeling, is success. It is only too easy to be ungenerous in recognizing the attainments and achievements of other men. But genuine love 'envieth not,' **knows no jealousy** of any success or credit won by a neighbour. Some Corinthians were still far short of this high level (see iii. 3, 2 Cor. xii. 20). In a good sense the verb could be applied to spiritual ambition, as the apostle does in xii. 31 (**set your hearts on the higher talents**), but the very eagerness to excel in spiritual gifts might induce an unfriendly, grudging feeling towards fellow-Christians who outdid oneself. Again, love 'vaunteth not itself,' **makes no parade** of its own success, **gives itself no airs** on the score of its energy or insight. The rendering of the second verb as 'not puffed up' shows that the apostle had already noted some ugly symptoms of ostentation at Corinth (iv. 6, v. 2, viii. 1), but religious conceit covers a still wider range; nothing is more responsible for bad feeling in a community than the temper of flaunting, which leads some to set themselves up, on the ground of personal attainments, or even to spoil charitable aid by a patronizing spirit.

5 From achievements Paul now passes to (*b*) the equally trying sphere of injuries as a test of love. True love never injures others, nor does it resent injuries at their hands. Love 'doth not behave itself unseemly,' is **never rude** or unmannerly. Some of the Greek fathers took the words to mean that love is never ashamed to undertake even what seem to be degrading duties, or to endure scoffs and suffering, in its task of humble service. Theodoret and Chrysostom both assume that this is what the apostle has in mind; the latter, with an allusion to John xiii. 4 f., observes that 'he who has this admirable spirit of love will refuse nothing for the sake of those whom he loves,' stooping to the meanest services of help. But the phrase, as followed by **never selfish**, points to an avoidance of any unseemly conduct such as that of people who insist upon their own rights or opinions, to the disturbance of the peace (e.g. xiv. 40) or to the damage of the rights of others (x. 23), by inconsiderate and self-assertive behaviour. It hurts people to be treated in this way. 'Seeketh not her own' is the exact phrase of x. 24, but **selfish** describes such open expressions

of bad feeling as Paul notes in iv. 7, vi. 7, vii. 7, ix. 12, xi. 21, and xiv. 12, the taint of self that makes good people sometimes reckless and inconsiderate of their fellows, ready to trample on their rights and prejudices. As for injuries suffered at the hands of others, love bears them without being **irritated** or exasperated; it does not fly into a paroxysm (literally) of anger, resenting the wrong. ‘Thinketh evil’ is a phrase of the Greek Bible which means plotting evil (Zech. viii. 17, **plot no evil in your heart against a neighbour**), but here it means reckoning evil in the sense of harbouring injuries; when any wrong is done to one, as Dr. S. T. Blomfield happily explained the idiom, in his *Recensio Synoptica* (1828), ‘love does not, as it were, enter it in a notebook, in order to bear it in mind, as matter of reproach or vengeance.’ Possibly Paul recollected such a use of the phrase in the *Testament of Zebulun* (viii. 5), where ‘love one another and think no evil against any brother’ implies, as Dr. R. H. Charles noted, that ‘love does not enter in a ledger the wrongs done to it.’ Love in this sense is **never resentful**; when people are slighted or badly treated, they do not make a careful mental note of it, if they possess the charitable temper.

The primary bearing of what follows is not upon injuries 6 done to oneself personally, but on wrongdoing generally. The situation is created by some sin on the part of another member in the community. When people break down or go wrong, there is an ugly, unholy temptation to gloat over the failure, and even to discuss the scandal with a heartless zest. To Paul this sort of zeal is positively hateful. True love never does that; it is **never glad when others go wrong**, the one thing that gladdens it is any proof of **goodness** (the opposite of ‘iniquity’ being ‘truth’ in the sense of a straight, true life, as in v. 8). ‘Rejoiceth not in iniquity’ does not refer to the sin of Schadenfreude, but either to the positive relish which some good people seem to take in discussing details of a local scandal or to their malignant satisfaction in pressing for the punishment of the offender. Again there is an anticipation of Paul's counsel in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, for in the *Testament of Gad* (iv.–v.) the noble contrast between

hatred and love includes the reminder that ' if a brother fall, hatred instantly takes delight in proclaiming it to everybody
7 and is urgent that he be convicted and punished.' Whereas genuine love is always **slow to expose,** reluctant to drag a scandal into the light of day. It ' beareth all things,' not in the sense of standing anything (ix. 12), not even as palliating an offence, but as disposed to cover the ugly business up rather than to expose it hastily by talking of it in public. This use of the term occurs in a colloquial fragment of Sophocles (614), where Queen Phædra tells her court ladies that, instead of gossiping about it, ' in the case of a woman, women should not expose anything discreditable.' Such is the meaning of Prov. x. 12 (**love draws a veil over all wrongdoing**). Instead of suspecting and eagerly denouncing the offender, love will be **always eager to believe the best.** And if the offence proves to be a sad fact, which cannot be overlooked any longer or condoned, in that case love has a further duty ; it is **always hopeful** that the penitent will do better. Hence it is **always patient.** Love can wait. Once a fault is rebuked, once a member is disciplined by the Church, the spirit of love prompts Christians, as they are Christians, not only to forgive but to show the man that they still believe in him and are ready to stand by him, giving him time to pull himself together (see 2 Cor. ii. 5–8). Here is a special school for patience, then. It is a test of love to be **always patient,** even under repeated disappointments, in place of becoming cynical and sharp with people who are regaining their position and endeavouring to rehabilitate themselves after a moral break-down.

The lyric is thus a lancet. Paul is probing for some of the diseases that were weakening the body spiritual at Corinth. No doubt, his rapid, searching words have a much wider range. Thus, ' rejoiceth not in iniquity ' might include the wider sin of jealousy (see on iii. 3). Also, the demand that Christians should **always** be **eager to believe the best** that can be believed, instead of suspecting hastily the worst of other people, extends to cases in which no direct evidence of wrongdoing has been as yet forthcoming. But the counsels on love in this far-flung sentence (4–7) are not random strokes ; primarily they are pearls strung on the twofold cord which has been already indicated.

Love never disappears from the scene, never lapses (Luke 8
xvi. 17) like an outworn regulation. How can it, when this is the vital spirit of the Christian religion, the supreme expression of life in the Body ? Paul is not a moral idealist, detached from the setting of historical Christianity, as he pours out his glowing words on love. Those who are bidden to serve others thus, as well as those who are the objects of such service, are the brothers **for whom Christ died.** The hymn on love is not apart from what has been urged by him already on consideration and unsparing devotion to one another as binding obligations for all in the fellowship. Humble self-sacrifice, according to real Christianity, was enshrined in the very heart of God himself, by what Christ was and did. It was eternally valid, as it could never be for Judaism, which repelled such a divine initiative or principle of action as a scandal. Paul, in protesting that the most favoured and gifted could not do without love, and that it lay within reach of the poorest and least gifted, the illiterate and unintelligent, in the Church, is working from the centre of the faith he has put forward, in which God's free, full love was the start and source of everything in life. The love of one Christian for another is the outcome of their love for him, which in turn is evoked by his love for them. For the apostle, as Schweitzer puts it, ' love is not a ray which flashes from one point to another point, but one which is constantly vibrating to and fro,' within the circle, or rather the living union, of God, Christ, and the Church. Such brotherly love cannot therefore disappear from any fellowship which is vibrating with the divine Spirit of Christ as devotion to the ends of God in other people. Nor is it intelligible apart from the consciousness of what the Lord Christ was, and is, and is to be. ' On the Christian view, the best thing in life, the highest thing in man, can be possessed and enjoyed by the most obscure, insignificant, and humble of mankind. We are too accustomed to this idea to be surprised by it ; but without the life of Christ it would have seemed fantastic.'[1] It was so

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[1] R. W. Livingstone, *Greek Ideals and Modern Life*, p. 166.

new and startling in the first age of the Church that Paul has repeatedly to press it upon the conscience of his churches, but always, as here, in the wake of its divine, eternal source (Gal. v. 14 f., 1 Cor. viii. 11, 2 Cor. viii. 9, Rom. xii. 4 f., Phil. ii. 5 f.), which, for the apostle as for any primitive Christian, derived not simply from the example of Jesus, but from his living Spirit in the Church.

Love never disappears from the scene, for apart from such love there would be no communion with God and man. But other gifts have their day and cease to be. Great as is the value even of prophecy, knowledge, and 'tongues,' their function is confined to the brief interval till the Lord returns; their efficacy not merely depends on the humble gift of love but is limited to the present phase of things which is passing away (vii. 31). Whereas, in our religious experience, there is nothing temporary about love, which by its very nature is supreme and lasting (8–xiv. 1).

8 **As for prophesying, it will be superseded; as for 'tongues,'**
they will cease; as for knowledge, it will be superseded.
9 **For we only know bit by bit, and we only prophesy bit by**
10 **bit; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will be**
11 **superseded. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I**
thought like a child, I argued like a child; now that I am
a man, I am done with childish ways.

12 **At present we only see the baffling reflections in a mirror,**
but then it will be face to face;
at present I am learning bit by bit,
but then I shall understand,
as all along I have myself been understood.

13 **Thus 'faith and hope and love last on, these three,' but**
xiv. 1 **the greatest of all is love. Make love your aim, and then**
set your heart on spiritual gifts.

11 In the light of xiv. 18–20, the illustration of childhood may well be an incidental allusion to the 'tongues' in which one talked of things divine, as though Paul wished to bracket it with prophecy and knowledge. Certainly he has prophecy in

mind as he offers the illustration of the **mirror.** Real as prophetic revelations are—not self-induced, but projected by supernatural realities—they are a blurred medium compared with the direct, distinct vision which will be ours when we are changed in the risen life to come (xv. 51). When that **perfect** 10
state arrives, **the imperfect,** where we **know bit by bit,** will pass. As **perfect** is mature (ii. 6), in opposition to immature, he naturally thinks of childhood, but hurries on to use a local metaphor. As yet **we only see** God **in a mirror.** There were 12
some semi-transparent windows at this time, but he does not mean 'through a glass' window; it is an allusion to such vision as is possible **in a** metal **mirror,** like those which the Corinthians manufactured of polished bronze (see 2 Cor. iii. 18). To bring out the idea of imperfection, he inserts a Greek phrase (*en ainigmati*), which is the opposite of 'clearly.' The use of magical mirrors in divination was familiar to everyone in that age; Philostratus (viii. 321) makes his hero Apollonius claim to 'see in the sheen of a mirror all that is happening or that is to happen.' But the sole point of the apostle's illustration is to contrast indirect and direct knowledge. He is thinking of the well-known contrast in his Greek Bible between ordinary prophets, who knew the Lord merely through visions and dreams (*ainigmata*), and Moses, who was promised direct intercourse and a vision of the Lord '**face to face,** not in any *ainigma*' (Num. xii. 6 f.). 'Let me not see thee, as in a mirror, thy being reflected in something other than thyself as God'; so Philo paraphrases the prayer of Moses in Exod. xxxiii. 13 (*Leg. Alleg.* iii. 33). It is implied (though a modern reader may miss the point) that one does not look into such a mirror to see oneself; it is to behold the reflection of God or of the things of God, which **at present** are only to be observed through an indirect medium. Paul knew, like any rabbi, that prophetic insight, which was the highest possible, could be no more than 'vision in a mirror'; but he also knew, like Philo, the famous allegory of the Cave, in which Plato described men with their backs to the light of the outside world, merely capable of perceiving by their senses shadowy hints of reality for the time being in the imperfect representation of phenomena.

So, the suggestion is, the truths of God cannot reach us here and now except over our shoulders, as it were. Present revelations of God, even through inspired prophesying, are but **reflections**, and **baffling reflections** at that, piecemeal and indirect. One day we shall be enabled to turn round and **see** him **face to face.**

Rabbis sometimes thought that the end of the present world was implied in the prophet's prediction that the redeemed of Israel would see the Lord **face to face**, as he returned to Zion (Isaiah lii. 8). It was an expression of devout longing in apocalyptic (Rev. xxii. 3) as well as even in the mysticism of the Isis cult. A characteristic interpretation is provided in Paul's accompanying words on the perfect knowledge of God attainable by Christians. The highest reach is not even a vision of abstract beauty or truth, as a Greek might have expected, but an experience expressed in terms of intimate fellowship: '**then I shall understand as all along I have been myself understood** by the God whom now I shall see **face to face.** I shall have learned my lesson. I shall be no longer limited in my insight into him. Never has his insight into me been limited.' Once again (as in viii. 3) **understand** or 'know' carries the thought of personal interest and affection. God's knowledge of his own folk is not like a searchlight, playing with cold impartiality upon their lives; Paul reflects that, little as he (i.e. any Christian) can comprehend God at present, God comprehends him and cares to comprehend him. Man is never a mystery to the loving God whom he is seeking to know and love, though God at many points may be a mystery to him. It is implied, of course, that the only prospect of attaining perfect intuition into his nature is by **learning** how to love the Lord in the person of his adherents (as, from another standpoint, in Matt. xxvi. 31–46). To **see** him **face to face** is at once the other side and the reward of having sought to **see** him in this fellow-Christian or that, as one has imbibed the Spirit of the Lord's Body; the experience is not any lonely rapture or private ecstasy of beatific vision, but the fruition of response (in personal devotion to others) to the eternal personal interest of the Lord in them and theirs.

So the lyric really ends, as it began, with an 'I' stanza. The next rich sentence is by no means so simple as it sounds. 13
The Greek word which is rendered 'But now,' or 'And now' in the English Versions, is logical (as in Rom. vii. 17, etc.), not temporal. It means 'So then,' or **thus.** Paul is not carrying on the antithesis of present and future (now . . . then) from the stanza immediately preceding; he is reverting to **love never disappears,** after the aside of 8*b*–12; in this sentence he sums up the final value of **love** as the quality which qualifies for the exercise of any spiritual gift, and also as the criterion for their relative importance, which is to be the topic of xiv. 2 f. This is fairly plain. But why introduce **faith and hope**? Not because these were the nerve of a gift like prophecy, whose day was soon to be over. It is the present order of experience about which he speaks, where, as he had already indicated (though never so closely and explicitly), **faith and hope and love** were lasting powers, standing the strain of fellowship and proving the permanent, abiding elements of life with God and for God. The two novel and puzzling features in the sentence are this order of **faith, hope, and love,** and also the comment: **but the greatest of all the three is love.**

Once the sentence is viewed as a climax to **love never disappears,** the meaning of **the greatest is love** cannot be that, while in the risen life after death or the Advent, in which Christians are **with the Lord** (2 Cor. v. 11, Rom. viii. 24), **faith and hope** in him will be needless, whilst love, which is of the divine essence, the very spirit of **the perfect** experience or knowledge of him, naturally persists. Whatever truth there may be in this, it is not Paul's immediate interest here. Possibly love is reckoned superior to the two others because it has a wider range, open to those who have few if any special gifts, and also capable of being practised as long as life holds out. Thus, at the close of the seventeenth century, when John Eliot was an old man of over eighty, worn out by his missions to the Indians of New England, and at last conscious that his faculties were failing, he is said to have remarked, 'My understanding leaves me, my memory fails me, my utterance fails me; but I thank God my charity holds out still.' Or Paul may mean that love is more inclusive. There may be faith and hope without love, as he has hinted (in verses 2 and 3), and as the saying of Jesus preserved in Matt. vii. 21–23 implies (even miraculous powers being no necessary proof of genuine devotion to the Lord) ; on the other hand there never can be love without unselfish faith and hope (verse 7), for true **love is always hopeful** and (in the literal sense of the term) ‘ faith-ful.’ It is probably on the line of this thought that the apostle’s mind is moving here. The presence of love as the really essential quality is the final criterion of Christian fellowship and service, when spiritual gifts are in question, and he is now about to discuss these in more detail, after having spoken, as he had promised (xii. 31), of this **higher path** which all must tread, whether or not they qualified for the high **talents** of prophecy and *glossolalia.*

As for ‘ **faith, hope, and love, last on, these three,**’ the literary form recalls a Greek idiom which occurs in the popular creed, satirically phrased by Aristophanes in the *Clouds* (424) : ‘ Chaos, Clouds, Tongues, these three ’ (are my objects of faith). What is less clear is the precise meaning of Paul’s phrase. It is certainly distinctive of Christianity ; no basis for such a correlation exists in Judaism or in the pagan ethics of any cult or philosophical school. With some hesitation I print the clause within inverted commas, in order to suggest that originally it may have had an independent setting. The words sound like a reminiscence from some primitive Christian oracle or hymn, possibly composed by Paul himself, when speaking **in the Spirit** and with his **mind** (xiv. 15), like viii. 6, xii. 4–6, 26. Elsewhere he does mention faith and hope and love together, no doubt (as in 1 Thess. i. 3, v. 28), but never with love as at once the final and the primary affection in religion—or rather in the common life of the Church, since he never confines them to the individual. The succession is rather faith, love, and hope, as in Gal. v. 5, 6, where **by faith we wait in the Spirit for the righteousness we hope for,** such faith being **active in** a brotherly **love** to which a primary rank is assigned among the Christian virtues (Gal. v. 22). But more than this is urged here, in the cry that no activity of the Spirit, not even faith or hope, avails apart from such love. At the same time, the superiority of love to faith and hope does not denote love as a further and fuller stage in the religious experience. Two centuries later some Neoplatonists, who were well acquainted with the Christian vocabulary, and even with most of the New Testament, adapted the phrase by turning it into such a sequence, though displacing love from the final position. Porphyry, for example, posits the four elements of his new theology as faith, truth, love, and hope, changing the Christian term for love into the Platonic *eros* and inserting truth. These four principles are explained thus: faith that salvation means the turning of the individual soul towards the Deity, in desire for the truth of his being, ought to generate a warm, affectionate love, which in turn is sustained, within the pure soul, by good hope of eternal bliss. Paul had no such sequence in mind when he wrote, **the greatest of all three is love,** nor is it likely that any such idea originally lay behind the supposed saying from some other context that '**faith and hope and love last on.**' In its present application the psychological interpretation of the maxim, already suggested, is the only one that is natural, and its relevance is determined by the immediate sequel: '**Make love your aim,** xiv. 1 **and then,** only then and thus, with a realization that such love is primary, as **a common concern for one another** (xii. 25), **set your heart on** the **spiritual gifts** which involve faith and hope.'

Especially on prophecy introduces a discussion of the two **spiritual gifts** (xiii. 1–2, 8) which particularly appealed to some ardent Corinthians. Contrary to their opinion, Paul prefers prophecy to *glossolalia*, and gives his two reasons. First (*a*), prophecy edifies the Church, whilst 'tongues' merely edify the individual himself (2–5); an illustration of this from actual life (6–11) is followed by the practical conclusion of 12–19. A second reason (*b*) is that prophesying impresses even outsiders; an illustration or proof of this from the Bible (20–22) opens up into a practical application to contemporary worship at Corinth (23–25). Then follow some directions for the proper exercise of both prophecy and 'tongues,' these highly coveted gifts in worship (26 f.).

The criterion of value is **love,** but so little is Paul the slave of a word that he chooses once more (viii. 1, 10, x. 23) to employ the cognate language of **edification** and **edify.** As Erasmus put it in the *Enchiridion Militis* (c. 5), 'Paul writing to the Corinthians sets love higher than miracles and prophecy and tongues of angels. Never tell me that love consists in going often to church, kneeling before the shrines of saints, lighting candles, and multiplying rosaries. God has no need of such practices. Paul calls it love to edify your neighbours, to count them all as members of the same Body.' However, instead of speaking about **the Body** (xii.), the apostle now speaks directly about **the church.** Indeed, as it happens, there are as many references to **the church** in this one chapter as in the whole of Second Corinthians.

2 **Especially on prophecy. For he who speaks in a 'tongue'**
addresses God, not men ; no one understands him ; he is
3 **talking of divine secrets in the Spirit. On the other hand he**
who prophesies addresses men in words that edify, encou-
4 **rage, and console them. He who speaks in a 'tongue'**
edifies himself, whereas he who prophesies edifies the
5 **church. Now I would like you all to speak with 'tongues,'**
but I would prefer you to prophesy. The man who prophe-
sies is higher than the man who speaks with 'tongues'—
unless indeed the latter interprets, so that the church may
get edification.

Speech was the most impressive feature of worship at Corinth (see on i. 5 and xii. 8, 28), inspired and inspiring words spoken by men of God as well as songs and ardent prayers. There is no place for any fellowship of a gathering in silence,
2 not even in verse 30. Speaking in 'tongues' was not inaudible but inarticulate ; the **divine secrets** (xiii. 2) of this rapturous soliloquy in some seizure of **the Spirit** were not like the **divine secrets** which apostles or prophets revealed to the Church
3 (iv. 1, xv. 51). Usually the word for **console** meant stimulus by counsel (see Acts xiii. 15) to some rise in faith, any religious appeal to aspiration in view of doubt, dullness, or difficulty ; here this is expressed, however (see 1 Thess. ii. 11, iii. 12), by

the allied term **encourage**, which covers advice, entreaty (verse 31, 1 Thess. iv. 1, v. 14) or any moral incentive, whereas **console** applies to the special sphere of inward or outward trouble. Anyone engaging in this heartening service to his fellows is of **higher** value than the individual who merely 5
edifies himself, getting spiritual satisfaction by thrills of 4
ecstasy which never pass beyond his private experience, even when he is sitting in the group. **Unless indeed** he manages to 5
interpret his babbling cries when he regains consciousness, explaining to others what he had been moved to say in prayer or praise **to God.** Sometimes an enthusiast could tell the gathering what his sighs and cries had been about, as one might recount a dream after wakening. This faculty of recalling the contents of a mystical rapture for the common good, Paul goes on to add (verse 13), was a further gift, for which one ought to pray. Otherwise, what good to **the church** is speaking in a ' tongue ' ?

As the following discussion turns on the characteristics of this strange phenomenon called *glossolalia*, or speaking in tongues, it is well at this point to sum up in outline what it meant to primitive Christians.

Speaking with tongues, or ' in a tongue,' was a phenomenon of devotion which was so common at Corinth that Paul does not require to explain it. All local Christians had witnessed it in worship ; some practised it, or rather were susceptible to it ; many longed to enjoy it as a signal proof of God's Spirit (see above, p. 176). We can only infer from the apostle's criticism of the phenomenon what it really meant. Traces of its recurrence are to be found elsewhere in contemporary Christianity, but nowhere, except in this letter (xii.–xiv.), does Paul or any other writer discuss its value and limitations. Evidently in the Corinthian or Achaian church speaking with tongues had acquired an importance of its own, as one vivid expression of the inner ferment and tension of the primitive faith in its apocalyptic expectation of the End.

It was by no means a homogeneous phenomenon. There were **various kinds** (xii. 28). But one common element led to all being grouped under the term **tongue.** To speak in, or with, a tongue sounds at first a strange phrase. How else could one speak? But (*a*) when these primitive Christians spoke in a tongue, it seemed as though the tongue ran off with them. Broken murmurs, incoherent chants, low mutterings, *staccato* sobs, screams, and sighs, dropped from the speaker's lips in hurried, huddled utterances. Instead of the mind controlling the tongue, as it did in the more conscious forms of prophetic speech, the tongue appeared to be moved by some spirit which had taken possession of the votary.

> His speech was like a tangled chain;
> Nothing impaired but all disordered.

For some moments the speaker was unconscious of his audience and of his surroundings, as a stream of meaningless syllables poured from him. It was believed that he had been caught up into some heaven of the Spirit, but all that people saw and heard was his tongue quivering, as with convulsed lips he broke out into imploring or adoring rhapsodies.

Again (*b*), the Greek word for tongue (*glossa*), like our English term, meant not only the physical organ, but a language or dialect, and such cries sometimes included weird, strange words which sounded foreign. A collection of abstruse and antiquated terms is still for us a glossary. Plutarch reports that the older style of the Pythian Oracle at Delphi was 'verses, "tongues," ambiguous utterances, and obscure sounds.' So in the new Christian oracles of *glossolalia*, as Paul hints in xiv. 9–11. At times the enthusiast actually appeared to be talking some outlandish jargon, if not positive gibberish. His language was not arbitrary indeed; it was supposed to represent a divine monologue, bursting through the lips of the unconscious enthusiast, or even a sort of divine dialogue between himself and God or angels (xiii. 1). Nevertheless it sometimes sounded like the speech of a foreigner, with syllables that corresponded to nothing in the vernacular.

For these reasons a phenomenon which had occurred in the lower strata of Hebrew prophecy, which had parallels in the Greek and Roman world of sibyls and oracles, as one form of religious ecstasy or divination, and which assumed unique proportions in a primitive Christianity where there was often more of the cataract than of the canal, acquired a new name. It was termed ‘ speaking with, or in, tongues ’—tongue-talk, in short. Rushes of spiritual fervour poured into the community, under the power of the Spirit in the new era. The sense of exaltation was often accompanied by joy, the thrill that marked off Christianity from Judaism and allied it to the stirring experiences of the soul in some of the cults. Doxologies, cries of praise as well as of prayer, were accompanied by more definite though involuntary exclamations which sounded as though the speaker were a mouthpiece for God himself. These virtuosos of the Spirit seemed to be using an argot of their own. Through their faculties of speech there was audible a dialect of the supernatural world which set the tongue vibrating like the strings of a harp plucked by invisible fingers and yielding old-fashioned, cryptic, uncanny sounds.

Nothing is said of any physical accompaniments such as have characterized the phenomenon in later history, where convulsive jerks and gestures have often marked the cataleptic trance. This entered into the experience of the ‘ little prophets of the Cevennes,’ towards the end of the seventeenth century. The Camisards, hunted down by the agents of Louis Quatorze, had to meet at night, as the persecution bore hard upon them ; living in severe tension, these devout Huguenots had ecstasies, shared by women and children as well as by men, who would swoon away with excitement, as the ecstatic utterances stirred and encouraged their faith. But the Corinthians had no such persecution to bear, though they were living in expectation of the imminent End. Nor, again, does the history of religion show that the phenomenon was confined to the illiterate ; though frequently it has been, and still is, practised in excitable, uneducated circles of revivalists, the Corinthian enthusiasts were far from being immature in intelligence, any more than their apostle himself. Doubtless there were all kinds of it, some transports being more impressive than others, some less demonstrative, some wilder and more abandoned. But at Corinth there is no suggestion that the phenomenon marked members of specially low culture or mental range.

How it could be sought is not easy to understand. At Corinth there must have been a tendency on the part of some to work themselves up into such ecstasies, by listening to them in a gathering. It may be that fasting was employed, as an additional means of auto-suggestion, to induce visions and dreams. The singing would stir enthusiasm, and naturally any such gift would be expected as an answer to prayer. It is interesting to find that while a devout enthusiast like the cultured Edward Irving longed to possess the gift, he never attained it, though he lived among some English people in last century who believed, as he did, that they exercised it. This would tally with the implication of Paul's language in the first century that the gift was not for all, even though anyone might covet it humbly and seriously. He never suggests that it might be expected as an invariable accompaniment of conversion and baptism, which Luke seems to do in the Book of Acts (x. 46, xix. 6).

It is not difficult in the light of psychology to understand *glossolalia*. Here we meet nervous energy discharging itself in a rapid torrent of gasping, incoherent cries from the subliminal consciousness under the powerful religious tension of some revivalist ecstasy. Sporadic cases have occurred down to our own day, from Korea and India to Europe. Neither is it difficult to understand how some forms of it were to be found in primitive Christianity, where the New Age had opened with manifestations of what were believed to be the powers of the Spirit entering with unwonted accesses into human nature. Here, men felt as they listened to such a rapt speaker, here, the speaker himself believed, God was speaking through him, not simply by him ; he was possessed by the divine Spirit, his very powers of utterance surrendered to a supernatural force ; it was all a proof of the living God present and directly active in the very unconsciousness of the passive agent. Here was a fulfilment of the ancient prediction (i. 2) that in the latter days of the messianic age, when God visited his people, he would pour out his Spirit on all, men and women, young and old, slaves and freeborn alike, till they saw visions and dreamed dreams. The real difficulty is not so much to understand the variety of these tongues as to form any conception of how they could be interpreted (xii. 10, 30, etc.). But before this question can be answered, it is needful to analyse the apostle's attitude towards the whole phenomenon.

It was a vital problem at Corinth to arrive at a right judgement upon speaking with tongues as an expression of the faith. Some sober-minded Christians in the local church, as at Thessalonica, evidently were shocked ; they desired to check the habit (xiv. 39) as no more than an indication of unbalanced minds which discredited the Church. It may have seemed to them suspiciously like the dæmonic possession of their old pagan religion (xii. 2, 3) or a recrudescence of some corybantic features in contemporary cults, a noisy, hysterical exhibition which intelligent Christians ought to discourage. But the majority greatly admired it, and some serious, earnest souls even coveted it as the spiritual gift of gifts. Surely there could be no more convincing proof of the indwelling Spirit than this abandonment of consciousness to supernatural power. They ranked it as high as prophecy, and even higher. Paul's decision, which is both sympathetic and critical, is made in view of both parties, the enthusiastic and the shrewd. He values the gift as something not only good but exalted ; it is a divine manifestation of the Spirit, not a hallucination. He admits that it is something to be coveted (xiv. 1–5, 39). He himself is proud of having the gift, and he never dreams of doubting the reality of an inspired ecstasy which he knew from experience to be authentic. **Thank God, I speak in ' tongues ' more than any of you !** He would not have any such expression of the Spirit quenched by cool criticism. It is to be desired, not despised. Better deep feeling, better even unintelligible raptures or involuntary seizures of ecstasy, now and then, than calm indifference or clever arguments or superficial sentiment ! On the other hand he declines to regard it as primary. It is perhaps significant that he mentions it only at the end of his lists (xii. 7–10, 28–30) ; it is at any rate significant that the entire argument of xiv. is to relegate speaking with tongues to a lower position of importance for the Church than prophecy, on the double ground that it (*a*) is too individualistic as well as (*b*) because it was apt to engender self-conceit (xiii. 1, 4). Writing in view of ardent Christians who maintained that there was no gift like that of *glossolalia,* he corrects their exaggerated estimate by applying the supreme criterion of love.

Paul does not criticize *glossolalia* for any demoralizing effects such as religious emotionalism often produces, when excitement unsettles the mind, induces hysteria, or even leads to sexual incitements. Neither does he directly suggest that such semi-physical phenomena are not necessarily tokens of highly spiritual attainment, although acute mystics in later days were alive to this. 'There are many saints who do not know what it is to receive such a favour' as an ecstatic rapture, Santa Teresa once remarked, 'while others who do receive them are not saints at all.' It is indeed possible that he alluded to some caution about these ecstasies when he referred to the gift of distinguishing spirits (xii. 10); though this primarily denotes discrimination of prophecies, it might cover an allied phenomenon like *glossolalia.* But he does maintain that such impassioned raptures should be interpreted, when they were part of worship. The capacity for interpreting a speaker in tongues was a special gift, which sometimes was possessed by those who did not share the gift of *glossolalia* itself (xii. 10, 30, xiv. 28). For this there was a certain parallel and precedent in Greek religion. Thus Plato argues that 'God gives to the foolishness of man the gift of divination,' i.e. the knowledge of divine truth for life (*Timæus,* 71). 'No one attains real, effective, inspired divination when he is in possession of his mind, but only as his power of intelligence is fettered in sleep or upset either by disease or some divine frenzy' (that is to say, enthusiasm). He adds that as no one in this state of trance can judge what he sees or hears (that being the function of conscious reason), 'it is customary to make the race of prophets pass judgement upon inspired divination; some indeed call them diviners' (absurdly, he remarks, for they are merely interpreters of the divine voice and vision); 'they should rather be called "prophets" of what is divined.' This is a partial clue to the Christian gift of interpreting *glossolalia.* Along with the thrilling, incoherent utterance went a sober, sympathetic gift of reading the mind of the speaker. By means of spiritual instinct, the interpreter was plainly able to enter into what he believed to be the convictions and aspirations of the tongue-speaker, so that by this thought-reading he could reproduce enough of the meaning to be edifying to the company. Some process of thought-transference is indicated. The experienced interpreter was not a prophet, in Plato's sense of the term, but he had to be so far in sympathy with the private outburst of praise or prayer to God in the ' tongue,' and yet at the same time detached, in full possession of his own conscious powers. Or, again, the speaker himself, on regaining consciousness, might be able to reproduce the gist of his inner experience for the benefit of an audience of which, during the rapture, he had been unconscious (xiv. 5). He might even pray, indeed he should pray, for this further gift himself (xiv. 13), instead of being content to be merely a recipient of the trance experience. In any case interpretation signified a power of piecing together the relevant essence of disjointed sayings or inarticulate ejaculations, for the edification of worshippers who had been listening to them in awed wonder. Thus, after listening to a glossolalist pouring out expressions like ' a–b–a–b,' etc., it might be interpreted by a hearer to mean, ' He is saying Abba.' We happen to have some records of *glossolalia* utterances, like those of the Russian sectaries[1] in last century, while similar sustained cries have been preserved in magical papyri of the second and third centuries, where there is a jumble of incoherent ejaculations, mixed up with native and foreign titles of deity. The later Christian records are in a sense less valuable, for they presuppose not only a knowledge of Scripture, but a more or less conscious desire to reproduce a pentecostal experience which was supposed to be a mark of the apostolic, genuine faith. But even in their least spontaneous records there is enough sometimes to suggest how certain utterances could be interpreted as oracular responses or direct invocations by a sympathetic hearer.

One special direction of the apostle for the re-unions is that, unless the speaker ' in tongues ' himself, or somebody else, can interpret the outburst and make it available for the congregation, the gift should be exercised in private as a devotional method. Also, even when interpretations are available, there are only to be two, or at most three, speeches ' in a tongue ' at any given service (xiv. 27, 28). That is, while he has too much awe for the phenomenon to rule it out, as some perhaps had appealed to him to do, he imposes restrictions on its exercise in the interest of the common good.

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[1] F. C. Conybeare, *Russian Dissenters* (1921), pp. 350 f.

This is due to his Hebrew religious training. As prophecy in the Old Testament had risen out of, and beyond, the ecstatic dervish-like practices of seers into a deeper conception of the divine purpose, as primarily revealed to conscious intuition and reflection, so Paul, who frankly held to visions, dreams, and ecstasies as media of revelation, insists that the supreme form of inspiration for the service of the Christian Church was prophetic, an appeal to the moral intelligence of the hearers which roused the mind and nerved the will and searched the conscience. The Corinthian delight in *glossolalia* as the supreme gift at their re-unions resembled too much the pagan idea of inspiration being essentially above or below consciousness. Oracles of the great ' lord ' at the shrine of Delphi, as Heraclitus put it, were revelations of the god's will through ecstasy, not through sensible words. So were the Sibyl's unintelligible cries. A priest or priestess, seized by sudden trances of the spirit, uttered mystic sayings which were held to be all the more divine as they were least rational and articulate. Philo in Alexandria had taken over the Greek notion, arguing that such ecstasy, when the mind or conscious reason was superseded, was the highest reach of the human soul in its quest for God. In mystical Hellenism, as in the more popular cults, with their addiction to the ' frenzy ' induced by various rites, this widespread belief in tongues as oracular responses had plainly affected some of the Corinthian Christians. Paul hailed every transport of the Spirit as a fresh proof that Christians were in the direct line of God's purpose, during the closing period before the End ; they, not Israel, were the successors of the prophets. Yet he is careful to preserve the guarantees of true prophecy, as it was being endangered by an enthusiasm which derived from contemporary ethnic movements of divine possession.

In this connexion it deserves notice that while *glossolalia* was a sudden, overwhelming phenomenon of spiritual possession, it was not entirely involuntary (xiv. 27 f.). Here the speaker differed from the contemporary *vates*, or prophet, in pagan religion, who was caught up in a frenzy, till he spoke like a lyre struck by the plectron. A speaker in a tongue could keep hold of himself somehow; he could at least choose between letting himself go and remaining silent in public. The abnormal impulse in its initial stages was not entirely beyond the control of the will, although, once begun, the trance was apparently involuntary. It would seem that such a gifted speaker, sitting in a glowing congregation, might be moved to use his gift as he yielded to the contagion of the group. The impulse would arise from suggestion, from an excited fervour of the company which weakened self-control. Paul insists that a glossolalist must be on his guard, as quivers ran from soul to soul, so much on his guard, and so alive to the edifying needs of the gathering, that he could restrain himself if too many had already taken part. To a certain extent the gift could apparently be managed or directed.

The functions of prophets must have overlapped those of tongue-speakers, since both gifts might be possessed by the same person, as in the case of Paul himself; but he distinguishes them sufficiently. **A lesson or revelation** (xiv. 26) would represent what many a prophet had to contribute, though the former would be specially connected with the teaching gift (xiv. 6, xii. 28) or knowledge (xii. 28, 8). **A lesson** or instruction on the deep truths of the faith was particularly for converts who required to be trained in the knowledge of the Old Testament and of what Jesus commanded. Besides this grasp of principles, stimulus for heart and conscience was required, and a prophet would provide this. Now and then, as in the case of Paul, he might have a revelation of the future, such as came to some Essene mystics of Judaism as they pondered the Old Testament, but no special stress is laid on prediction.

Any revelation might come during the service, stirred in the soul of some prophet who had not come prepared with an address. The Spirit blew as it listed. One might catch fire, as it were, from what another had said or was saying. But if he had no message, he must keep quiet, and even if he felt suddenly moved to speak when someone else was holding forth, he must restrain himself, instead of interrupting the service. Paul assumes two powers in a prophet. One is the power to speak, without being afraid to utter his message ; the other is the power of refraining from speech, which he regards as equally important. In a group of prophets, each must defer to the others, out of consideration for the common good. In the Journal of John Woolman, the American Quaker, he recounts how, on a mission tour, he would often sit quiet while his friend spoke : 'As for me, I was often silent during the meetings, and when I spoke, it was with much care, that I might speak only what truth opened.' This throws some light upon the humble, truth-loving temper which Paul desired at Corinth. The Christian prophet was not to be a mere medium, transmitting messages from the unseen world. His role was not that of a seer forced by some divine spirit to declare passively the truth of God. His powers of self-control rested on a consciousness of his vocation as a vocation for imparting the things of God thoughtfully and unselfishly to the Church.

The prophet is further expected to feel responsible not only for how long he spoke and for what he said, but for the contributions of his fellows. When one is speaking, the rest of the group are to exercise their judgement on what is being said. That is, even the inspired prophet is not above criticism from devout hearers. Their messages were to be received with respect, but not necessarily without discrimination. All prophets, as Paul admitted, spoke **bit by bit**, with but a partial knowledge of the truth. A message might need to be supplemented, if not corrected. There were obvious possibilities of ranting and exaggeration, even in the best ; to this Paul alludes in Rom. xii. 4–6. The inspiration of the moment did not exempt a speaker from the possibility of error or self-deception. 'One day,' John Woolman humbly confesses, 'being under strong exercise of the spirit I stood up and said some words in a meeting; but not keeping to the Divine opening, I said more than was required of me.' This again casts some light upon what Paul implies in the local situation at Corinth. He does not go into the requisite qualities for criticizing. Obviously such discrimination had to be not only truthful but loving, if it was to be of real service—for edification, and not an attempt to show off the man's own acuteness or to gratify the love of fault-finding. But the mere fact that the apostle lays this duty on the prophets is significant. He would have no prophet claim to lay down his *ipse dixit* for the Church. Without the safeguard thus provided, the primitive Church might well have become a group of clashing eccentrics and fanatics, each howling, ' Thus saith the Lord.' Thanks to this sane counsel of Paul, the Early Church was confronted with the healthy ideal of possessing not only inspired souls, but saints with clear judgement; ecstasy and discrimination were to join hands somehow. No doubt, the problem of what were the true criteria for judging prophets or ' spirits,' of distinguishing between true and false teachers, continued to be felt in the Early Church. But at the very outset Paul is laying down one simple criterion, though it cannot always have been easy to put it into force.

Glossolalia may startle or even awe the fellow-worshippers of the possessed person, but, so far as helping them is concerned, it is of no more value or meaning than indistinct music or a foreigner's gibberish. Such religious emotionalism lacks what the fellowship has the right to expect from any responsible leader of worship, viz. some prophetic utterance due to revelation or some lesson from God put before them so intelligibly that they can understand the force and sense of what is being said (6–11).

Suppose now I were to come to you speaking with ' tongues,' my 6
brothers; what good could I do you, unless I had some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching to lay before you? Inanimate instruments, such as the flute or 7
the harp, may give a sound, but if no intervals occur in their music, how can one make out the air that is being

8 **played either on flute or on harp? If the trumpet sounds**
9 **indistinct, who will get ready for the fray? Well, it is the**
same with yourselves. Unless your tongue utters language
that is readily understood, how can people make out what
you say? You will be pouring words into the empty air!
10 **For example, there are ever so many kinds of language in**
11 **the world, every one of them meaning something. Well,**
unless I understand the meaning of what is said to me, I
shall appear to the speaker to be talking gibberish, and to
my mind he will be talking gibberish himself.

7 Musical instruments like 'harps and flutes, though inanimate,
do speak to the passions of men, when they keep time and
order,' Plutarch notes, in his essay on *Moral Virtue* (iv.).
The shrill **flute** was shaped like an oboe or clarinet. This
happens to be the only definite allusion of Paul to the power
of music over the human spirit, comparing the inarticulate
sounds of *glossolalia* to the confused noise of notes which run
8 into one another, till one cannot **make out** the melody. Or, to
turn from peace to war, a bugle blast sounding the advance
must be clear, with clarion notes that none can mistake.[1]
9 So *glossolalia*, if uninterpreted, is no more than vapouring—
mere sound devoid of sense or profit. Indeed, no better than
10 barbarian or foreign languages, which sound mere **gibberish**
11 to anyone who does not understand them. There is a point in
these two illustrations of the phenomenon, for speaking in
'a tongue,' though not a song without words, sometimes became a sort of croon or musical lilt, and it often poured out
foreign terms, or what seemed to be such. But, before developing the latter element, Paul presses (12–19) his argument that,
owing to its lack of direct service to the worshipping Church,
speaking 'in a tongue' is inferior to prophesying.

12 **So with yourselves; since your heart is set on possessing**
'spirits,' make the edification of the church your aim in

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[1] When Newman and his friends advertised *Tracts for the Times* in 1833, to stir up the Church of England, they chose as their motto these very words: 'If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?'

this desire to excel. Thus a man who speaks in a ' tongue ' 13
must pray for the gift of interpreting it. For if I pray with 14
a ' tongue,' my spirit prays, no doubt, but my mind is no
use to anyone. Very well then, I will pray in the Spirit, 15
but I will also pray with my mind ; I will sing praise in the
Spirit, but I will also sing praise with my mind. Otherwise, 16
suppose you are blessing God in the Spirit, how is the
outsider to say ' Amen ' to your thanksgiving ? The man
does not understand what you are saying ! Your thanks- 17
giving may be all right, but then—the other man is not
edified ! Thank God, I speak in ' tongues ' more than any 18
of you ; but in church I would rather say five words with 19
my own mind for the instruction of other people than ten
thousand words in a ' tongue.'

' Spirits ' means the same as **spiritual gifts** (in verse 1) ; 12
though all such endowments came from the one Spirit, each could be understood as the indwelling of a personal spirit of prophecy or ecstasy (see xii. 10, etc.). The keynote of what follows is struck above (verses 2–5), viz. that the **aim** of all who take part in the service is to edify the congregation ; this 15
is the criterion which Paul, in one of his finest passages, lays down for the Corinthian enthusiasts. ' Those who meet within the church walls on Sunday . . . with the *esprit de corps* strong among them . . . would not desire that the exhortation of the preacher should be, what in the nature of things it seldom can be, eloquent. It might then cease to be either a despairing and overwrought appeal to feelings which grow more callous the oftener they are thus excited to no definite purpose, or a childish discussion of some deep point in morality or divinity better left to philosophers. It might then become weighty with business, and impressive as an officer's address to his troops before a battle.' Except for the fact that Paul turns from the military metaphor (verse 9) to the architectural, this modern appeal by Sir John Seeley, in the eighteenth chapter of *Ecce Homo*, brings out the essential point of the apostle's word, here and in verse 19. You want to have some access of super- 14
natural power ? Well and good. Only, ' tongues ' are not so

good for public worship as prophesying, unless the 'tongue'
13 speaker is able to interpret himself. Otherwise, while the
spiritual faculty (our equivalent for the surge of some super-
natural spirit) is active—lips moving convulsively as the
14 ecstasy sweeps the speaker into raptures—his **mind**, his con-
scious intelligence, is 'unfruitful,' out of action, **no use to any-**
16 **body,** whether he is praying or praising God. The **outsider** here
is the ordinary worshipper. 'He that occupieth the room of
the unlearned' is the transliteration of a Greek phrase for one
whose role is that of a bewildered hearer, who is outside this
region of spiritual ecstasy, uninitiated into such mysteries.
How can he say his **Amen** at the end of your rhapsody, when
he **does not understand** a syllable of what you are saying? In
synagogue worship one knew when to say Amen, at the close
of the stated prayers. But when worship was extempore, and
when someone was pouring out his soul in unintelligible
speech, who could join in the reverent **Amen** (so be it!) with
which every devout worshipper assented before God to what
the speaker meant to be some prayer of thanksgiving (Rev.
19 vii. 12)? The poor puzzled hearer is **not edified**! In a noble,
simple protest, Paul declares that in a Church service he would
rather utter a few quiet, intelligible words than pour out a
flood of incoherent cries to God, which **no one understands**
(verse 2).

Resign the rhapsody, the dream,
  To men of larger reach;
Be ours the quest of a plain theme,
  The piety of speech.

Not that Paul abandoned *glossolalia*. But he reserved it for private devotion. In church he could not bear to think of anyone being for any reason shut out of a worship whose end was to embrace and edify the whole body of the faithful; he wanted what Stevenson called the 'piety' of speech in the Latin sense of *pietas*, the dutiful consciousness of what one owed to the Family of God, the steady fulfilment of one's obligations, instead of indulging in self-centred rhapsodies which were irrelevant to the real object of public worship.
18 Not that the Corinthian enthusiasts must imagine he was out

of sympathy with *glossolalia*. They wanted to be possessed by some supernatural access of power in speech (verse 12)? 'I agree,' Paul admits. 'I too share this desire; indeed, I am not depreciating a gift which I do not myself possess, **thank God.** But it has limitations.' His criticism of *glossolalia* is all the more effective as it springs from sympathy with its aims and spirit. He is singularly conscious of his duty to others, and of their claims on himself, even in his most exalted moments. A classical scholar[1] has noted admiringly how Paul's mind, 'for all its vehement mysticism, has something of a clean, antiseptic quality.' This is apropos of his freedom from the weird cosmogonies of Iranian and gnostic religion, but it applies as truly to the present estimate of ecstatic mysticism at Corinth. There is a healthy, out-of-doors breath in words 19
which voice his desire above all things to be intelligent and helpful to his fellows, and blow away the pietistic extravagances into which *glossolalia* was in danger of lapsing. Something must be wrong about worship, he realizes, if it leaves simple folk unable to understand what is being said not only about God but to God.

The word **instruction** suggests intelligence. In the next paragraph (20–25) Paul appeals to admirers of *glossolalia* to overcome their rather childish delight in this religious excitement. His judgement is more convincing to us than his biblical argument in support of it. He is comparing the effects of prophecy and *glossolalia* upon strangers who dropped in to attend a service of the Word. They were not simply **outsiders** in the sense of being uninitiated in ecstasy, but pagans, who came for various reasons, some with not much more than curious interest, others with wistful longing. Their presence was a chance for Christian propaganda. Synagogues welcomed such casual attenders, in the hope of attracting them. They were on the fringe of many a synagogue in the Roman world, and from them came the proselytes. Even the rites and processions of a local cult like that of Isis were intended to impress outsiders as well as to edify the initiates. The priest of Isis at Cenchreæ tells the converted hero of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*

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[1] G. G. A. Murray, *Five Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 199.

(xi. 15) to join the ritual procession of the goddess as a trophy of her grace. 'Let those behold who are not of the faith, let them behold and learn the error of their ways.' In the Church as yet there was even less of such ritual than in the synagogue; the impressive feature was speech, particularly the Word of the Lord (i. 5) spoken from the lips of earnest souls. Judged in this light, *glossolalia* was obviously inferior to prophecy. Indeed a service which resolved itself into nothing else, instead of proving an attraction, produced on strangers such a bad impression that Paul declares this was designed by God. Surely 'tongues' were intended, according to Scripture, to be a sign or token of divine warning for amused unbelievers in public worship. Yes, he instantly adds, but prophecy, while meant for believers, has an effect even on unbelievers which is far superior to that produced by *glossolalia*.

20 **Brothers, do not be children in the sphere of intelligence; in**
21 **evil be mere infants, but be mature in your intelligence. It**
is written in the Law ***by men of alien tongues and by the lips***
of aliens I will speak to this People; but **even so,** ***they will***
22 ***not listen*** **to me, saith the Lord. Thus 'tongues' are in-**
tended as a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers;
whereas prophesying is meant for believers, not for unbe-
23 **lievers. Hence if at a gathering of the whole church every-**
body speaks with 'tongues,' and if outsiders or unbelievers
24 **come in, will they not declare you are insane? Whereas,**
if everybody prophesies, and some unbeliever or outsider
25 **comes in, he is exposed by all, brought to book by all; the**
secrets of his heart are brought to light, and so, falling on
his face, ***he will worship*** **God, declaring '*****God is really***
among you.'

20 Be intelligent (so Rom. xvi. 19) enough to recognize that prophecy, unlike *glossolalia*, has a positive value for the Church. He is still thinking of the latter as a public pheno-
21 menon. Has not its function been predicted as a sign of the latter days by Scripture (for **the Law** here as elsewhere is not
22 the Torah simply)? He recalls a passage from Isaiah

(xxviii. 11, 12) to prove that such a sign was intended to confirm scepticism, instead of arousing or inspiring faith as prophecy did. What would casual hearers think if they listened to a succession of 'tongue' ecstasies? Instead of being im- 23
pressed, they would call you **insane.** This is the term for religious frenzy. When the Scythians watched Bacchic raptures, in which the devotees claimed to be possessed by the deity, they scoffed at the idea of 'setting up a god who drove men into insanity,' as Herodotus records (iv. 79). Not that Paul identifies *glossolalia* with such wild ecstasies. He is simply noting its divinely appointed limitations, as shown by the effect it produced on outsiders, when it happened to occur at an ordinary service of worship, instead of at the love-reunion or eucharist. It had been anticipated in the Law, this ironical contempt for God. The allusion is rabbinical and far-fetched, for the outsiders at Corinth did not belong to the Lord's People. To a modern reader, indeed, the resemblance appears verbal and no more. But the passage seemed apt for Paul's purpose, because it mentioned foreign languages, and *glossolalia* occasionally did throw up such phrases in its raptures (see above, p. 208), and also because the only result was to make incredulous hearers scoff the more. It is not merely that the faithful get little or no good from undiluted *glossolalia*, but that pagan outsiders are moved by it to derision. **Outsiders or unbelievers,** Paul definitely remarks. The outsider might be one on the verge of faith, interested, but not yet converted, while others attended the service whose minds were sceptical and critical. On both, particularly on the latter, the effect of unrelieved *glossolalia* was most unfortunate.

This is another (see above, p. 141) indication of the freedom with which the apostle quotes the Old Testament, when, as usual, he desires a sacred phrase to corroborate his argument. In Isaiah, the prophet in the name of the Lord is threatening drunken priests and prophets of Jerusalem that he will speak to them through the unintelligible language or babble of foreign invaders, though even that punishing experience will not induce them to obey the Lord. There is no reason to suppose that Paul implied the Corinthians had a knowledge of the historical story, nor even that he himself thought of the tale. When he wished to apply an Old Testament story, he did so in detail, as in x. 1 f. He simply found in his textbook (p. 18) what he wanted, a verse about *glossolalia* and its limitations. He catches up this ominous warning, weighted with scriptural authority, to make his point sharper. As elsewhere (e.g. xv. 54), he is not using the Septuagint text, but some Aramaic version underlying a Greek text similar to that afterwards employed by Aquila, the literal Jewish translator. It is a paraphrase which preserves the general sense of the original, but very freely.

24 Prophesying, on the other hand, impresses more than those already in the faith. The man of God, moving his hearers by what lives and moves within himself, speaks, or may speak, with such overpowering effect that an outside pagan in the audience is affected, as the appeal for repentance stirs the heart. It is as though the preacher were reading the conscience
25 of some in the gathering. Even the casual hearer is awed ; he becomes convinced of God and convicted of sin, as one preacher after another exposes him to himself.

In some respects this experience was not wholly unfamiliar to people of the age. The remarkable impression produced by these true preachers at Corinth, with their power to speak of the faith (i. 5), corresponds to the searching power which Epictetus (iii. 23) says was felt by hearers of Musonius Rufus, the great Stoic contemporary of Paul. ‘ He spoke in such a way that each of us sitting there felt he was somehow being accused ; he had such a grip of things, such power to make each of us see his personal wrongdoing.’ Similar testimony is borne to Socrates in Plato’s *Symposium* (215–216). Paul describes the effect of Christian preaching in the Spirit, however, as an overwhelming sense of the presence of **God**. The man does not rave over the remarkable sermon, but **worships God**, which is the end of all worship ; he is conscious of nothing but God’s presence, and testifies to it openly. Outwardly the service had none of the marks of a Greek temple (iii. 16). It was an ordinary room in which the gathering was held. But it was a temple in the real sense of the term for this man, a place where God was present. It is noticeable that this is the only place where Paul uses the Greek term for **worship.** He seems to be recalling again a Scripture passage, possibly the description (Isa. xlv. 14) of foreigners at the end coming to worship at Jerusalem and **falling on their faces** before Israel with the cry, ' "**God is among you**" ! ' As genuine prophets, in eager, sincere faith, testify to their God, they impress and shake even some who are as yet outside the fellowship. With a power of spiritual discernment vouchsafed to intelligence and some experience of life, these men, who exercise their gift with no thought except that of extolling God's power and love and of moving others to share in his benefits, produce this extraordinary effect. Paul expects this to happen, as it must have often happened. It is another (see above, p. 176) proof of deep consecration in the finer spirits of the church (i. 5) and a fresh indication of the sound core at Corinth which underlay much that was showy and lax.

The following brief directions for worship (26–33) relate to edification and order, with special attention to the two devotional customs which, by the very glory of their freedom, required to be safeguarded against themselves. The application of shrewd intelligence to spiritual religion is the same as in the preceding paragraph. The Church is expected to be intelligent enough to perceive that the prophetic afflatus itself was not necessarily infallible nor complete in any utterance. The prophets are not to regard themselves as a union of free spirits who are above criticism, but as individuals responsible for one another, in the interests of the Church whom they serve with their gifts. Similarly speakers 'in a tongue' are to be subordinated to the good of the majority. This practical wisdom, or cool, quiet handling of supernatural powers and functions in the spiritual sphere, with its stress on the permanent influence of the Spirit, as opposed to any exaggeration of intermittent ebullitions, is one of Paul's great services to the Christianity of his day. It comes with all the more force in a letter in which he has had so much to say against mere cleverness and wisdom of an irrelevant type, and so much in favour of supernatural experiences like *glossolalia* or inspired prophesying. It was not enough for him that a speaker in church should be confident of his message, though no doubt such confidence helped to create confidence and to generate conviction in his hearers. Paul sought to have both speaker and hearers alive to the duty of thinking out the things of God in the gospel keenly and thoroughly. It is true to say of him that he was alive to the principle which Pascal once laid down, '*travaillons donc à bien penser : voilà le principe de la morale.*' **Be mature in your intelligence.** Even, be alive to the 'morale' of worship, in order to prevent it degenerating into unregulated excitement. He expects the Church to understand that the intuitions of their religious experience must be thought out, and that hearers as well as speakers should not accept everything said or proposed, even in inspired moments, at its face value. There must be not only inspiration but interpretation, and interpretation of inspiration (xii. 10, 30), with a consequent discipline for the sake of effectiveness and order.

26 Very well, then, my brothers ; when you meet together, each
contributes something—a song of praise, a lesson, a revela-
tion, a 'tongue,' an interpretation ? Good, but let every-
27 thing be for edification. As for speaking in a 'tongue,' let
only two or at most three speak at one meeting, and that in
28 turn. Also, let someone interpret ; if there is no interpreter,
let the speaker keep quiet in church and address himself and
29 God. Let only two or three prophets speak, while the rest
30 exercise their judgment upon what is said. Should a reve-
lation come to one who is seated, the first speaker must be
31 quiet. You can all prophesy quite well, one after another,
32 so as to let all learn and all be encouraged. Prophets can
33 control their own prophetic spirits, for God is a God not of
disorder but of harmony.

26 'I am glad to hear of the abounding variety in your meetings for worship. **Good !**' They had apparently been taught to begin with **praise**, as in the synagogue, where before the lesson from the Law the reader called out, 'Bless the Lord who is to be blessed,' and the congregation responded, 'Blessed

be the Lord who is to be blessed.' At Corinth it is significant that the first[1] contribution mentioned is **praise,** the glad and grateful sense of God finding expression in rapt rhythms or doxologies. The transliteration of the Greek word by 'psalms' is misleading here, for that suggests the Old Testament psalms. These were used in worship, and indeed supplied the form for some early Christian hymns. But Paul means hymns in general, which would include praises (15 f.) as well as prayers to God, partly prepared beforehand and partly improvised like interpretations upon the spot, as was the custom among the Jewish Therapeutæ, or 'Worshippers.'

When the Emperor Julian in A.D. 363 was endeavouring to revive some form of Hellenistic religion for the State, which would supersede Christianity, he advised those who were in charge of public worship to take special care of song. 'One should learn by heart the hymns of the gods. Many beautiful hymns have been composed, ancient and modern . . . the majority have been vouchsafed by the gods themselves in answer to prayer, whilst a few have been composed by men inspired by the divine spirit.' We have more evidence for singing in some Greek cults, like Orphism, than in the synagogue worship, and it is quite possible that **song of praise** has its common Hellenistic sense of a song with musical accompaniment. 'Each of you hath his song,' as Tyndale renders the phrase. The other two terms employed by the apostle in Col. iii. 16, **hymns** and (literally) 'odes,' meant varieties of religious music; for Philo hymns were the Old Testament psalms, and 'ode' in the Book of Revelation is a song in general. Evidently sudden inspiration was expected at these gatherings; impulses of the Spirit not only moved some to give an exposition or a quiet **lesson** to the audience (like the instructions that followed the reading of the Scripture in the synagogue), but swept others into lyrical cries of joy and adoration.

However, Paul is not drawing up any order of worship. All

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[1] 'I had appointed to preach at five in the morning; but soon after four I was saluted by a concert of music, both vocal and instrumental, at our gate, making the air ring with a hymn. . . . It was a good prelude; so I began almost half an hour before five' (Wesley's *Journal* for March 30th, 1787).

he does is to warn the more impressionable and enthusiastic members that they meet **for edification,** not for individual
27 exhibitions of their own gifts. Even one with the **tongue** gift must not let himself go in a **meeting** for public worship (p. 215), if **two or at most three** had already exercised this particular gift, or if there was no sympathetic listener present who could
28 interpret his utterances. Better **keep quiet in church** till he went home, where he could **address himself and God** (verse 19), i.e. enjoy his devotions in private. The Greek word for **someone** might mean 'only one,' not more (to save time), but the general sense is more natural.

29 If a tongue-impulse is not irresistible, much less a prophetic. Even the spiritual aptitudes of the prophets are not to be gratified, without regard to the interests of the group; self-control is required in order to prevent any display of one's own powers or any emotional self-indulgence. To save time, to prevent the service from becoming one-sided, **only two or three** of them are to speak, **while the rest** of the prophets, sitting by, **exercise their judgment** on what they hear. An example of this sudden revelation correcting one that had preceded, occurs a century later. When the martyrs at Lyons and Vienne in Gaul were imprisoned, one of them, an ascetic called Alcibiades, persisted in refusing all food except bread and water, alleging that he was inspired to this; but another prophet had a revelation that Alcibiades was wrong in thus rejecting food created by God. At their meeting, he declared, in the name of God, that his fellow-prophet was really an offence to the rest. Whereupon Alcibiades yielded. Which proves, the local church reported, that these prophets and martyrs were 'counselled by the Holy Spirit' (Eusebius, v. 3). In one way this incident is an interesting illustration of the need for a weak, scrupulous nature refusing to wound or offend the stronger faith of the majority (x. 29), but it also helps to throw light upon what Paul means here by saying that one prophet could put another right and that the common end
30 of all prophesying at its best was edification. 'You prophets, even apart from correcting one another, may **all** rise to your feet and exercise your gift in turn, for the benefit of the congre-

gation, since inspiration does not supersede self-possession.
A true prophet is supremely conscious of his function in the 31
body spiritual, which he is moved to serve. Even his own 32
feelings and reputation are secondary, compared to that.' A partial illustration of what is meant by the **control** of the prophetic spirit (p. 216) may be found in Epictetus's rebuke of Stoic lecturers who thought of their own reputation and showed off their powers of rhetoric, instead of realizing that they were there to train their hearers. 'In exhorting people, nothing is more effective than when the speaker shows his audience that he has need of them' (iii. 23), i.e. that he and they are in some common spiritual relationship. Similarly, though in a more complex situation, Paul expects and insists that even in supreme moments of fervour these gifted men of God must keep **control** of themselves at worship, in the interests of the fellowship. It is not easy to understand the exact situation, but he plainly saw nothing incompatible between a prophet's consciousness of the free Spirit and his consciousness of what was due to the immediate needs of the worshipping group. It is another proof of the apostle's genius that, for all his mystical prepossessions, he will not identify raptures of mind or soul in church with any corybantic or ecstatic phase of prophecy. 'Here,' as Dr. Johannes Weiss remarks, 'a new form of spiritual energy emerges; instead of the animistic notion of an outside spirit dwelling in a strange abode, we come upon the conception that the divine Spirit and the human will may
coalesce and combine in a common power.' **Disorder** includes, 33
but is not confined to, the rivalry of competitive preaching, as might be inferred from the use of the term in 2 Cor. xii. 20; it is the opposite of that gravity and reverence (verse 40) which form the vital atmosphere for any genuine enthusiasm. **You can all prophesy quite well, one after another,** he tells the eager prophets at Corinth, with much the same good sense as Wesley displayed in controlling the love-feast at Burslem (on March 29th, 1787)—'such a one as I have not known for many years. While two or three first spoke, the power of God so fell upon all that were present, some praying and others giving thanks, that their voices could scarce be heard; and two or

three were speaking at one time, till I gently advised them to speak one at a time; and they did so, with amazing energy.' For Paul, with his characteristic balance of mind, the God whose Spirit moved speakers in the church was a God of **harmony** or 'peace,' the latter term referring (as in Rom. xiv. 19, etc.) in its rabbinic sense to the orderly behaviour and inherent good feeling which was regarded by the synagogue very much as love was regarded by Christians, i.e. as the blessing and the obligation of God for the common life of his people. Here Paul thinks of it specially in connexion with worship. In the divine orchestra all the players perform in **harmony** as they respond to the Leader's beat in the common music, instead of one or another breaking away in rivalry and individual display into some solo effort.

Originally the conclusion of 26–33 was the double admonition which lies in 37–40.

37 If anyone considers himself a prophet or gifted with the Spirit,
let him understand that what I write to you is a command
38 of the Lord. Anyone who disregards this will be himself
disregarded.
39 To sum up, my brothers. Set your heart on the prophetic gift,
and do not put any check upon speaking in 'tongues';
40 but let everything be done decorously and in order.

37 A final word to any recalcitrant enthusiasts of the Spirit, claiming to be prophets or inspired, who might be disposed to resent this ruling (26–33) as if it were merely Paul's private opinion. He claims the authority of **the Lord** (emphatic) for it. Nowhere else does he employ the singular **command** in this connexion; usually it means the Torah. Indeed the phrase was so strange that it was soon altered to the plural, a reading which passed through the Vulgate into all the English versions, or else **command** was omitted (' what I write to you comes from the Lord '). The sharp warning that follows is not addressed to ignorance, but to a deliberate ignoring of the command.
38 'Let him be ignored' by the Church as someone not worth attention, was an early modification of the original future,

he will himself be disregarded by God. Paul's apostolic authority extends even to regulations for worship (xi. 16), since worship involved a true service of the Lord and was not a matter of opinion.

As in xi. 33, an affectionate word for the entire church on the 39
whole matter (verses 2 f.) follows the note of authority. It includes a warning against any repression of the tongue gift, lest some of his readers, going from one extreme to another, might draw such a conclusion from the regulations he had been obliged to lay down in the interests of orderly worship.
Decorously was a familiar term in such a connexion. If a man 40
fulfilled some civic office properly or discharged public duty thoroughly he was said to have acted ' duly and **decorously.**' The word answers to the **harmony** of verse 33. It reflects the Roman *gravitas*, not any staid or stiff rule that would discourage rapture or spontaneous cries. There is to be a becoming dignity in the faith which extends to worship no less than to the general behaviour of Christians (1 Thess. iv. 12, Rom. xiii. 13) ; the flush and rush of enthusiasm must not be allowed to let spiritual fervour degenerate into ranting hysteria or splashy excitement, with several eager souls parading (xiii. 5) their gifts, talking at once or interrupting one another.

The following paragraph (33–36) is the one passage in the letter where it is difficult to be sure that Paul is speaking. Its very position is uncertain. At an early period in the history of the text, 34 and 35 were placed after 40. The last words of 33 (**as is the rule in all churches of the saints**) introduce them, and 36 follows them rather more naturally than if it were taken as a general remark closing the whole discussion. But, apart altogether from this difficulty of position, there is the apparent contradiction between the paragraph and xi. 3 f. Here he seems to take back what he had there permitted. Psychologically it is hard to conceive that if Paul had objected on principle to married women taking any part at all in public worship, he would have spent time in discussing what they should wear when they prayed and prophesied. Neither is there sufficient evidence to show that in xi. 3 f. he was thinking of more private or informal gatherings such as moderns would call prayer-meetings, whereas xiv. 33–36 refers to public worship. Unless we are to suppose that he had suddenly changed his mind in the interval or that one passage belongs to an earlier letter, we are faced by two alternatives. One is, that the present passage is an addition by some disciple of his, who, like the author of 1 Tim. iii. 11–12, believed that his master would have ruled out any addresses by matrons from the worship of the Church, and took the opportunity of inserting such a prohibition here. Against this hypothesis there is the style and the spirit of the passage, which seem quite characteristic of Paul himself. The other alternative is more probable. In reality he never vetoed a devout woman from exercising, even at public worship, the prophetic gift which so many women in the primitive Church enjoyed. He must have had experiences not unlike that of Wesley at Bath (September 17th, 1764), when, after asking his permission, a lady prayed aloud at a gathering: 'such a prayer I never heard before. It was perfectly original; odd and unconnected, made up of disjointed fragments, and yet like a flame of fire. Every sentence went through my heart, and, I believe, the heart of everyone present.' At the same time Paul objected strongly to a practice, evidently popular at Corinth, of matrons taking part in the discussion or interpretation of what had been said by some prophet or teacher during the service. The Greek word for **speak** (*lalein*) may carry its lighter and lower sense of 'chatter' or 'talk' (as in verses 9 and 11), compared with the less derogatory *legein*. In his *Marriage Counsel* (32), the staid Plutarch observes that 'a woman ought to do her talking either to her husband or through him,' instead of lifting up her own voice. So Paul would be discouraging women from interrupting the service by putting questions. No doubt, to **ask information** might be done seriously. Questions could be put to a rabbi in the synagogue, though woman's right to education was not definitely recognized by the rabbis. Musonius Rufus at Rome went so far, on the other hand, in stating the Stoic ethic, as to claim that a woman had as much right and capacity as a man to understand the philosophy of the noble life, in her own way. And Paul similarly agrees that it is legitimate for her to seek information about some statement made by a prophet or teacher. Yet matrons had better reserve their questions for private enquiry at home. Paul does not feel that they are called or inspired to this kind of promiscuous talk in Church gatherings. They must be modest, not forward. He was far too convinced of spiritual impulses to suggest that the Spirit was to be quenched in any woman who felt suddenly moved to pray or prophesy ; but none the less he was true to the tradition of Jewish and Roman piety as he ruled out any effort on the part of women to intervene of their own accord in worship. After hearing his amanuensis read over what he had dictated on worship, he suddenly remembers that he had better say a word on this.

As is the rule in all churches of the saints, women must keep 33-34
quiet at gatherings of the church. They are not allowed to
speak ; they must take a subordinate place, as the Law
enjoins. If they want any information, let them ask their 35
husbands at home ; it is disgraceful for a woman to speak
in church. You challenge this rule ? Pray, did God's word 36
start from you ? Are you the only people it has reached ?

This is a pendant to the previous discussion. It occurs to 33
Paul, or it was brought to his mind by one of the Corinthians beside him, that one source of **disorder** was the feminist tendency to depart from the ordinary **rule** and allow married women to join in the service by opening their lips freely. **Keep** 34
quiet means even more than a prohibition of chattering. Worship is not to be turned into a discussion-group, he insists, holding to the synagogue practice which forbade women to read even a lesson from Scripture aloud. The **subordinate** position of **women** to their husbands in **the Law** of Genesis (iii. 16 ' he shall rule ') extended to worship. Some rabbis, 35
like Paul's younger contemporary Eliezer, even maintained that a woman should devote herself to domestic duties instead of asking questions about the Torah at all. Paul's sense of Christian freedom carries him beyond such a narrow conception. But, though he recognized their right to ask questions **at home** and to speak under the moving of the Spirit in church,

he pronounces it **disgraceful for** them to put themselves forward voluntarily **in church** services where the Word was spoken. As in xi. 13 f., an appeal to Scripture is backed up
36 with an appeal to natural propriety. But it is not argued. Paul curtly breaks off any further discussion of the subject by again appealing to the general consent of the Church. Was a local innovation at Corinth to disturb use and wont? 'Was it you who launched the word of God upon the world?' So Dr. Gunion Rutherford renders the sentence. Here, though not in x. 11 (where the same word as **reached** is used), the metaphor might be legal. 'Has the gospel come down to you as its sole heirs? Is it your private property, with which you think that you can do as you please?' But after **start** the ordinary sense of **reached** is more apposite and quite effective. 'Has it made its way to none but you? Fall into line with churches other and older than yourselves, instead of starting some congregational novelty which differs from catholic praxis.'

As it happens, this is the one allusion in the letter to **God's Word** as a term (1 Thess. ii. 13) for the revelation in the gospel, with special emphasis upon Jesus as the Christ (Acts xviii. 5), a proclamation to men of God and through men of God, on what had happened in history, on what is happening, on what ought to happen, and on what will happen, all being determined by the Lord Jesus as God's saving power for human nature. While Paul never associates **God's Word** with nature, as the Old Testament does, it includes the destiny of the redeemed in the creative order which the risen Lord has inaugurated and lives to bring to completion; it is the manifesto of his active sovereign purpose, now ruling the various churches and presently to be fulfilled at the End.

THE CHURCH, THE GOSPEL, AND THE RESURRECTION

(xv.)

The resurrection of Christ was part of **the story of the Cross**; it belonged to **the gospel** which had generated the Corinthian church (iv. 15). The return of the Lord was on the lips of all

Christians at the eucharist, and allusions to the End had repeatedly been made in the course of the letter (e.g. i. 8 **the day of our Lord Jesus,** iii. 13 f. **the Day,** iv. 5, v. 5, vi. 2, 14, vii. 31, x. 11, xiii. 8 f.). For the primitive Christian the last Things were the first things ; his present position rested on his great hope, stirred by the **Christ** who had been **crucified.** There was nothing surprising in such a truth being discussed by an apostle writing to one of his missions, for all that was distinctive in the worship and conduct of the Church lay in this expectation. But why here ? And why from this particular angle ? We can only surmise that, in the course of dictating the letter, he had been gravely alarmed to hear of some ' enlightened ' Christians in the community who may have had affinities with the ultra-ascetics (vi. 12 f., vii.), and who at any rate took Christ as a divine **Wisdom** without making his resurrection of cardinal importance to their own spiritual destinies in the near future. This new theology of the higher life led Paul to begin by restating the common basis of **God's word** in the Palestinian tradition which he, like the other apostles and witnesses of the Lord's resurrection, represented with authority (1–2, 3–11).

XV.

Now, brothers, I would have you know the gospel I once 1
preached to you, the gospel you received, the gospel in
which you have your footing, the gospel by which you are 2
saved—provided you adhere to my statement of it—unless
indeed your faith was all haphazard.

He had already noted some indications of a failure to main- 2
tain or **adhere to** the gospel traditions of **God's word** which they had **received** from him (e.g. in the eleventh chapter), but his concern is now over the saving, accepted basis of their faith. **Haphazard** belief is random impulse, which does not take religion seriously ; it characterizes people who are heedless of what **the gospel** implies for mind and morals. Presently he calls it **futile** make-believe. Such ' light half-believers ' of their creed make nothing of it because they have not made it everything ; it is to them a ' casual creed,' which they have

not taken pains to think out or to follow up. The apostle recalls the heart of the gospel, as expressed by 'Jesus is
3 Lord, the Lord who rose from the dead.' The special or cardinal aspect of his gospel, what is **first and foremost** in his preaching, is the resurrection. That enters into the entire context of belief and behaviour, determining all else. Leave that out, drop it or evaporate it for any reason, and you are outside faith altogether, in Paul's judgement. No resurrection, no gospel!

My statement of it, he now proceeds to show (3–11), started from the authentic, original gospel; it is not a private speculation of my own, but the common gospel of all the authorities in the Church, a revelation of the risen Lord made to myself as well as to them. The thread of the following argument is that apostolic authority depended on the vision of the risen Lord. **He was seen** refers not simply to a revelation, but to a choice and summons to declare the gospel, setting the recipient to the work and cause of the Lord in the power of the Spirit. As in the case of an Old Testament prophet, the call came by way of a vision, in which the knowledge of God's mind and will was revealed for his service, to spread his truth. Hence these revelations brought a mission or commission to bear testimony to their content, and those who received this favour had authority to teach and preach with full powers, as envoys and representatives of the Lord. Paul repeatedly claims this for himself (i. 1); it was claimed for the Twelve (Matt. xxviii. 16 f.) and for more than the Twelve (Luke xxiv. 33–49). As Paul had already shown, to be an apostle was not merely to have seen the Lord but to have done work for the Lord which attested the commission (ix. 1, 2). All who are mentioned in this record of Paul were thus endowed with authority to bear witness. The Twelve were the nucleus of a wider circle of 'apostles' in this specific sense, embracing the Twelve, the brothers of the Lord, and a larger group.

3 **First and foremost, I passed on to you what I had myself received,**
namely, that Christ died for our sins as the scriptures had
4 **said, that he was buried, that he rose on the third day as**

the scriptures had said, and that he was seen by Cephas, 5
then by the twelve ; after that, he was seen by over five 6
hundred brothers all at once, the majority of whom survive
to this day, though some have died ; after that he was seen 7
by James, then by all the apostles, and finally he was seen 8
by myself, by this so-called ' abortion ' of an apostle. For 9
I am the very least of the apostles, unfit to bear the name
of apostle, since I persecuted the church of God. But by 10
God's grace I am what I am. The grace he showed me did
not go for nothing ; no, I have done far more work than
all of them—though it was not I but God's grace at my side.
At any rate, whether I or they have done most, such is what 11
we preach, such is what you believed.

' Once we read our Bible in the light of the resurrection, we 3 recognize that the story of the cross was foretold. **Christ died for our sins,** not for his.' **The scriptures** are passages like those on the Servant of the Lord ; Paul omits any reference to this in connexion with the burial, however, since Christ's burial had been with honour paid to him, not in **a felon's grave, with criminals** (Isa. liii. 9). **Buried** (really buried) confirms the 4 death, as the visions confirm the resurrection ; yet **buried** leads on to resurrection. **Buried ?** Yes, but that was not the last word on the matter. It is not the empty tomb that concerns Paul here, but what followed the resurrection. He uses the perfect tense (here and in 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 20) seven times over, and only in this letter, to bring out the existing result (as in 2 Tim. ii. 8) ; **rose** is literally ' has been raised,' a decisive Action of God, which determines all that follows in Christian experience, the new worship, the fellowship, and the sure hope. **On the third day** reflects not only the ancient belief that three days intervened between two important events (as, e.g., the votaries of Isis celebrated the recovery of their deity three days after his murder), but also the rabbinic appeal to a scripture like Hosea vi. 2 (on the third day we shall be raised), in order to prove that the general resurrection would take place on the third day after the old earth and heaven had passed away. Rabban Gamaliel, not long after Paul, cites the prophetic word thus, in the fifty-first chapter (on the messianic era) of the *Pirke R. Eliezer.* For Paul it was a word that had been already fulfilled. It is just possible that, even before Clement of Alexandria, primitive Christians had seen this prefigured in the symbolism of the proviso laid down by the Law of Holiness (Lev. xxiii. 9 f.) that the firstfruits or sheaf should be lifted up on the morrow after the sabbath, i.e. on the first day of the week, the third after passover (see below on verse 20).

5 Three of the visions are to individuals (Peter, James, and himself), three to groups, and they are in order of time. Paul selects the visions most relevant to his immediate purpose, summarizing those familiar to the Corinthians. At an early date **the twelve** was corrected to 'the eleven' of Matt. xxviii. 16 and Acts i. 26, a reading which passed through Jerome into the Vulgate. This appearance, like that to **Cephas,** forms part of the tradition preserved in the Synoptic Gospels, but it is
6 different with the next two. Unless the vision to **over five hundred** disciples **all at once** corresponds to the story of Pentecost or to the close of Matthew's Gospel, there is no trace of it elsewhere either in connexion with Jerusalem or with Galilee. You can verify the vision, Paul implies, for **the majority** are still alive. Probably they, or some of them, had borne testimony abroad. The only record of the appearance to
7 **James,** the Lord's brother, is in a quaint early tradition preserved by the Gospel according to the Hebrews, which tells how the Lord went to him specially to assure him of the resurrection.

After a collective vision experienced by all the apostles, not
8 simply by the twelve, Paul **finally** (of the initial visions which he is narrating) comes to his own, the first of the visions and revelations he had enjoyed (2 Cor. xii. 1), the vision which had made him at once a disciple and an apostle. He actually **was seen by myself, by this so-called 'abortion' of an apostle.** With a flash of humble pride, he catches up a scornful taunt flung at him by some of the strict Jewish Christians: 'An abortion of an apostle, this Paul, with his sudden conversion, so irregular, so violent and abnormal, so long after the others had seen the Lord! This mal-formed soul, to claim the vitality

of the real apostles!' Yes, he admits ironically, 'it is a miracle that I came to life at all. I am indeed the one example of this in the apostolic circle. But look at what has come of my birth. It may have been an abortion, this life of mine, lifeless before I saw the Lord; but how he has made me live and work! My career since then has not been abortive!' James, no doubt, had not believed in the Lord before the resurrection; 9
but Paul had actually **persecuted** God's **church,** and was thus even more unlikely to receive a revelation. Yet it had come, **by** 10
God's grace, and it had worked. **Grace** implies (as in iii. 10) the divine commission, but here it denotes the undeserved favour of God which had singled out a persecutor and made the **unfit** fit not only to belong to him, but to serve him, even, he adds naïvely, to outstrip the others. The last recruit is first in active service. **Though it was not I, but God's grace** in its power of inspiration **at my side.** Then, resuming the argument, 11
after this side-stroke at those who depreciated his mission, he concludes by asserting that he and the others were at one in their personal testimony to the resurrection. **Such** was **the gospel you** once **received** from me and **believed.** And now some of you talk as if you could enjoy the gospel apart from this vital truth!

The group at Corinth who doubted any **such thing as a resurrection** of or **from** the dead, declaring that dead men do not rise, do not need to rise, are countered by Paul with an eager *reductio ad absurdum* argument (12–19), to prove that it is not the apostolic gospel, but the new spiritualism, which is 'a fond' or rather a cruel 'invention,' a baseless dream, unlike the sure Palestinian tradition of Christ's resurrection with its glorious prospect for Christians.

Now if we preach that Christ rose from the dead, how can 12
certain individuals among you assert that 'there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead'? If 'there is no 13
such thing as a resurrection from the dead,' then even Christ did not rise; and if Christ did not rise, then our 14
preaching has gone for nothing, and your faith has gone

15 **for nothing too. Besides, we are detected bearing false witness to God by affirming of him that he raised Christ—**
16 **whom he did not raise, if after all dead men never rise. For**
17 **if dead men never rise, Christ did not rise either ; and if Christ did not rise, your faith is futile, you are still in your**
18 **sins. More than that : those who have slept the sleep of**
19 **death in Christ have perished after all. Ah, if in this life we have nothing but a mere hope in Christ, we are of all men to be pitied most !**

12 The **you** is emphatic, ‘ you Christians who accepted the fundamental truth which we apostles were commissioned to bring.’ What this group at Corinth believed exactly about the resurrection of Christ, it is hard to make out from the apostle’s references to them. Certainly they were not sceptics or Christians of any Sadducean temper. So far from being rationalists, they were mystical enthusiasts of the Greek type who could not see anything relevant to spiritual Christianity in any doctrines which drew upon a Jewish belief about bodily resurrection after death as needful to immortal life. But how did they conceive of what had happened to the living Lord ? Was it as a real resurrection, and if so in what form ? All we know is that Paul charged them with failing to think out the consequences of their accepted faith (verse 2). His aim in restating the authentic tradition had been to cut the feet from below this new theology of the ultra-spiritualists who, in his opinion, did not understand what real belief in the risen Lord committed them to. These **individuals,** with their immortality of the disembodied soul, were fostering unauthorized speculations ; they did not belong to the apostolic succession. To be satisfied with a hope of eternal life which sat loose to any future reunion of soul and body was, according to Paul, meaningless talk for any so-called Christian. In arguing with Jews who adhered to the pharisaic belief in the resurrection, the primitive Church could indeed appeal to this as a preliminary argument against an outright denial that Jesus could have risen (Acts iv. 2). Paul himself takes this ground in his speeches,
13 according to the book of Acts (e.g. xxvi. 7–23), and he hints at

it here in passing (**if, after all,** as you assert, **dead men never rise**—verses 15, 16). But it was only the reverse side of the deeper argument that the resurrection of Jesus formed the one sure basis for any hope of resurrection in the future. What else dealt with the **sins** (3, 17) that stood in the way of life? To Greek or Roman Christians such as he is addressing here, this was the crucial contention. Could they not realize that the resurrection of **Christ from the dead** was not only a case of resurrection but *the* resurrection which carried with it any prospect and promise of eternal life for those who set store upon being **in Christ** (18, 19)?

Perhaps these mystical **individuals** appealed to the teaching of Paul himself. Had he not taught that Christians are raised to newness of life already, dying inwardly to sin as they were baptized? They may have been precursors of those errorists denounced in 2 Tim. ii. 17, 18, where the immoral consequences of such a belief are noted, though Paul does not refer to the effect of their views on conduct, except as he hints at it in verses 33 and 34 as already he had done in vi. 12 f. A century later there were Christians who announced, 'there is no resurrection of the dead, but as soon as we die, our souls are taken up into heaven.' So Justin heard them preach, and he retorted that they were unorthodox, since 'I and all other Christians of orthodox belief know that there will be a resurrection of the flesh and also a millennium in Jerusalem' (*Dial.* 80). Paul does not allude to the latter item of messianic belief when he speaks (in verse 25) of Christ reigning, but he would have agreed with Justin that there was no genuine Christianity apart from faith in the future resurrection. At this point, however, he is 14
protesting that such a repudiation of the future resurrection upsets the entire testimony of the Lord's commissioners. This is his first rapid counterstroke. He never calls apostles or 15
prophets 'witnesses' to God, though he occasionally speaks of their **testimony** (as in i. 6, 2 Thess. i. 10). Still, as he indignantly reminds the Corinthians, these all would be **detected bearing false witness to God,** instead of true testimony, if upstart mystics had the last word. Furthermore, **your faith** 17
has indeed gone for nothing, since this notion renders faith

futile by evaporating the risen power of the Lord to deal with sins. Why not realize that ominous consequence, instead of entertaining idle dreams of a heaven to be entered without the forgiveness and deliverance which Christ alone can provide.
18 **More than that,** the very **hope** of Christian faith is deprived of its basis. Think of your own dead (verses 6 and 29), he cries! At Thessalonica Christians had doubted in anguish whether those who died before the Lord's return would really and truly rise, as though the only hope for complete reunion with the Lord lay in the present life being taken up, before death, into bliss. This was not the outlook of the mystics at Corinth.
19 They were not over-eager eschatologists. At least, Paul's next words show that he interpreted their position very differently. Literally he says, 'If in this present life we have set hope on Christ only.' But naturally the word 'only' does not refer to **in this life**; it is as though Paul had said, 'hope set on Christ—and **nothing** more than hope! Is that all, **a mere** wistful, faint trust in some larger **hope,** which rests on nothing?'—on no faith in Christ crucified and risen, such as for the apostle was the sole basis of the saving (Rom. viii. 23 f.), eternal hope. Most pitiful would be the plight of our Christian dead and of ourselves who are still alive, if our hope had no stable foundation or solid content in the deliverance from sin which lay at the heart of Christ's resurrection and which alone enables us to triumph over death. To Paul such an expectation of reunion with a phantom Lord awaiting a disembodied spirit is no more than a cruel illusion, no sort of glory worth the sufferings of the present life. Great expectations, none greater! And all to be shattered at the End! The same concentrated passion throbs in this sentence as in the similar one below (verse 32).

The likelihood is that these mystical individuals were, like many members of the cults, chiefly interested in the present and future reunion of redeemed spirits with God, once the material ties of the body were overcome, and that they had not seriously considered the death of Christ, beyond believing that somehow he must be living, in virtue of the abundant phenomena of the Spirit within the Christian fellowship. The latter fascinated them, but as flowers cut from their root in the historical revelation. Now the preaching of the apostles rested on an Action of God in the crucifixion and the resurrection, which, as interpreted by Paul, meant that at the resurrection God had invested him with the power of the Spirit over the dæmonic powers of sin and death (Rom. i. 4). The ' other Christ ' had not undergone this unique experience, and consequently there was no gospel of real hope in him. Christians might indeed lie down at death to a **sleep** from which they hoped God would awaken and restore them to life **in Christ.** Their fellows might share the same hope for them and also for themselves as they still lived and perhaps even suffered for the good cause. But there was no such awakening, Paul argued in horror. The dead **have perished,** and the fate of the living is equally tragic, despite all talk of living or hoping **in Christ,** since such a ' Christ ' has no power to rescue or to revive his deluded adherents. For the apostle the only hope worth speaking of was the outcome of God's redeeming grace (Gal. v. 4, 5, Rom. v. 2–5, viii. 9–11), full salvation at the end, which came into action through the cross and resurrection of Jesus the Lord. And that was no **mere hope** for the future, unsupported and uninspired by God's decisive action in the recent past. He speaks of **hope** here in its ordinary, secular sense (almost as in ix. 10). Who is more **to be pitied** than the man who goes through time and trouble with a so-called ' Christian ' hope which is detached from the faith of the apostolic gospel and which has nothing behind it except a vague illuminism with some indirect memories of one still lying in his Syrian tomb ?

It is characteristic that as he rises to the height of his great argument he never mentions eternal life or the immortal hope ; such were too abstract and mystic for his purpose. The resurrection of the body, not the immortality of the soul, is for him the central issue. It is also paradoxical that he dismisses as a pathetic object the very Hellenistic hope on which some local Christians seem to have been staying their souls, such a hope as that held out not only by religious philosophy of the Platonic order, but by some mystery cults, namely that one secured bliss after death through undergoing a rite which by a sort of sympathetic magic anticipated death and the life to come, guaranteeing immortality by initiation. All this formed part of the **wisdom** sought by **Greeks.** Later on, indeed, one of the reasons why many devout Christians were attracted to the great gnostic presentations of Christianity was because these enlightened schemes of salvation offered a less Jewish view of death. The inherited Jewish forms of eschatology in popular Christianity, such as the millennium and the speedy advent of Christ, did not appeal to such spirits ; they preferred other and less realistic ways of depicting the ultimate dominion of God over evil and matter, with less interest in the body either of Christ or of Christians. One germ of this depreciation of the body lies in the position which appears to have been taken up by doubters of the final resurrection at Corinth.

From the pathetic thought of any Christians trying to face life with nothing better than a Christ of their own devotional dreams or speculative insight, Paul turns with glad relief to the realities of the gospel (20–22). As Jewish literature was dying away in a few deep sighs of apocalyptic prediction, a contemporary prophet declared that another and a better life was required in order to make up for what the godly had to bear in the poor, transient phases of the present. ‘ If there were only this life, which belongs to all men, nothing could be more bitter ’ (Apocalypse of Baruch xxi. 13). Paul's happier outlook enables him to see a new, divine order already dawning on men through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.

20 **But it is not so ! Christ did rise from the dead, he was the first to be reaped of those who sleep in death.**
21 **For since death came by man,**
by man came also resurrection from the dead ;
22 **as all die in Adam,**
so shall all be made alive in Christ.

20 For Paul the resurrection is a creative Act of God, as he completes the divine plan and purpose. **Christ did** actually die and **rise,** but not as an individual ; his resurrection somehow carried with it the resurrection of all Christians. It is no mere

hope, it is assurance, of this saving Action of God, which is the gospel; Christ's resurrection is the pledge of more to come. Like **the firstborn of a great brotherhood** (Rom. viii. 29), **the first to be reaped** associates him with his members; he too had to die and be buried. To us, if not to Paul (see on verse 4), this term recalls, in the wake of verse 7, the picturesque coincidence that Christ rose from the dead on the morning of the very day when the first sheaf of barley to be reaped was offered solemnly within the temple (Philo, *de Sept.* ii. 10). At any rate, priority here means more, since his rising is the anticipation and the 21
realization of new life after death for the new humanity of believers. There is no clear indication, either here or in what follows, that Paul contemplated a final redemption of the race, as his language might suggest upon the surface. He is dealing with the hopes and fears of the Christian group, not giving a general explanation of the future destiny of mankind. A contemporary Jewish prophet, writing out his revelation of the future, where he could not see any but a few being saved, declared, 'Truly I shall not weigh what sinners have prepared for themselves, death and judgment and perdition; rather I will rejoice in what the righteous have won, homecoming and redemption and recompense' (Fourth Esdras viii. 38 f.). Paul might not have dismissed the subject thus, but he shared the same position. Those who are said to **sleep in death** are the faithful. No one writing these words, whether Jew or Christian, 22
could mean any but the righteous or the saints who **in Christ** belong to God. **All** of them (as in Rom. v. 17, 18), **all** who belong to the same order as **Christ** shall be restored to life, in its fullest sense, in him in whom already some have **slept the sleep of death** (6 and 18). It is only by isolating the words, **all shall be made alive in Christ,** that they can be referred to the general resurrection, as though this was Paul's equivalent for that Pharisaic tenet; but such an interpretation implies a vaguer sense for **in Christ** than the apostle normally suggests, besides missing the fact that to be **made alive** is more than to be resuscitated. What Paul appears to argue is that the new order of being, with its fullness of divine life, starts from the risen Lord. Margaret Fuller, the American transcendentalist in

last century, once remarked that 'Handel was worthy to speak of Christ. The great chorus, "Since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive," if understood in the large sense of every man his own saviour and Jesus only representative of the way all must walk to accomplish our destiny, is indeed a worthy gospel.' It was not so that Handel spoke and sang of Christ, and it is to be feared that Paul would not have considered this cheerful notion of self-saving worthy of being called a gospel at all.

Before developing what he meant by **made alive** in the juxtaposition of **Adam** and Christ (45 f.), Paul explains that each, Christ and Christians, must have an orderly position in the working out of the divine plan at the end (23–28), since Christ's resurrection involves theirs; but, as Christ's part is active and commanding, he is carried away by the thought of Christ's relation to God in and after the end.

23 **But each in his own division :—Christ the first to be reaped ;**
24 **after that, all who belong to Christ, at his arrival. Then**
comes the end, when he hands over his royal power to God
the Father, after putting down all other rulers, all other
25 **authorities and powers. For he must reign until his** *foes are*
26 *put under his feet.* **(Death is the last foe to be put down.)**
27 **For** *God has put everything under his feet.* **When it is said**
that *everything* **has been put under him, plainly that**
28 **excludes Him who put everything under him ; and when**
everything is put under him, then the Son himself will be
put under Him who put everything under him, so that
God may be everything to everyone.

23 **Each** is to be made alive by God **in his own** appointed **division** ; **first Christ**, as we have learned (3–11) ; **after that**, soon but not immediately, Christ's people **at his royal** coming or **arrival.** As we might say, the two divisions of the risen host then come into action. Paul does not need to instruct his readers that Christ's people or followers then share his sway,

even over angels (vi. 2–3), although no details are ever given by him about the length of this period. **The end comes.** That is 24 the vital matter, the end of what had begun at the resurrection, namely the triumph of life over death. And (this is as vital) it is due to Christ the Lord, the Son of God. So the story of mankind, which began far back with the disobedience of Adam, now ends with a glorious reversal of sin and death at the hands of God's strong Son, who thus succeeds in enthroning his **Father** over the universe, at **the period of the great Restoration** (Acts iii. 21), when the divine purpose in creation is at last completed, his royal will of life and love no longer challenged by any alien power of darkness like sin and death.

In Greek the phrase is simply **the end,** without any verb. Since the words (*to telos*) might be taken adverbially, as in 1 Pet. iii. 8, some think the whole passage should read, ‘ Then finally, when he hands over his royal power to God the Father, after he has put down every other rule and authority and power (for reign he must, till he has put all the enemy under foot), Death is put down as the last enemy.’ This interpretation has been recently restated by Professor Burkitt (in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, xvii., 384, 385) and Karl Barth independently. But although Death is the supreme opponent of the living God, for Paul (see below, 55–56) as well as for other Christian prophets, the apostle seems at this point to be absorbed in the reign of Christ ; it is on the whole more natural to regard the allusion to Death as a parenthetical remark on ‘ **all the foes** ’ than as the climax of the passage.

Another interpretation of *to telos* alters the whole outlook of the prophecy. Does it mean ‘ the rest ’ or ‘ the remnant ’ of mankind, redeemed from the powers of death and evil and made alive in Christ, so that all men are finally alive in him to God as once they were all brought under death and separated from God by having Adam as their ancestor ? The attraction of this view is twofold ; it supplies a third division (two classes of mankind after Christ) instead of merely two (Christ and his saints), and it provides a hint for the universal sweep of redemption in the world such as some believe to be implied in Paul's other prophecy of the final future (Rom. xi. 25–36).

But the evidence, from a Greek version of Isa. xix. 15 and a sentence in Aristotle, for *to telos* as 'the others' is too remote and ambiguous to support this ingenious hypothesis,[1] even if Paul could be supposed to have conceived any resurrection to life possible except for those already in Christ. Besides, the context makes it almost certain that he is using *to telos* here in its familiar apocalyptic sense of **the End** (i. 8). In an earlier revelation (1 Thess. iv. 13–18) he did mention a third group, namely those who survived till the Lord came, but here he assumes that his readers will understand how these are among **all who belong to Christ,** and he only recurs to them afterwards (verses 51–52), as he describes in more detail the consequences of the Lord's coming for such as do not actually die. At present, it is the Lord's **arrival** in relation to God's ultimate end for mankind that engrosses him. **Then comes the end,** a glorious End or consummation, the final victory of God over
25 evil. Christ is now thought of as reigning, not as reaped. **Reign he must,** in the divine order, till all is over. It is the active side of his position within God's purpose which is upper-
26 most, and at once Paul recalls the Scripture guarantee for this
27 complete triumph, turning to the psalms, where primitive Christians found so many anticipations of their Lord. To whom but Christ, the true messiah, did the words of the hundred and tenth psalm refer, about God promising to *put* all *his foes under his feet,* till he was in supreme control? Or the word of the eighth psalm, that *God has put everything under his feet*? It would seem as though **he must reign** suggested to the apostle the opening phrase of the hundred and tenth psalm, 'Sit thou at my right hand (sharing my authority),' and the divine promise of the eighth psalm that man was to have dominion over all God's works. Elsewhere Paul used the former phrase of Christ as now enthroned in the spiritual world. Here it started an apocalyptic application to his
28 conflict with evil powers. But it is the language of the eighth psalm which prompts him to remove any possible misapprehension of Christ's reign. God's sovereign will determined that

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[1] The proof for this is led by Professor J. Héring in the *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses* (1932), pp. 304–306.

reign. In loosely quoting the hundred and tenth psalm he had seemed to make Christ do what God had promised to do for him. Hence he explains the eighth psalm as a proof that Christ was conquering for God. The divine purpose in the reign of Christ is that **God may be** ‘ all in all,’ **everything to everyone,** with nothing to impair the communion between the Father and all who belong to Christ his Son.

The divine **must** in verse 25 is not exactly the same as in 25
verse 53, where it is general (as in xi. 19 and 2 Cor. v. 10).
Here it is connected with proof from Scripture, which furnishes
decisive evidence, as usual (see 3 f.), for new truths of revela-
tion from the same God who had inspired Scripture ; what
had occurred at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and what
was to happen after his return is all inevitably implied in what
had been already predicted. But in expounding the Scripture 28
he draws on current messianic categories of a limited and temporary messianic reign, prior to the resurrection and the last judgement which ushered in the final triumph awarded by God to Israel. A fuller interpretation of such apocalyptic traditions is furnished in the Book of Revelation, where the Oriental myth of a prince sallying forth to subdue his father's foes before returning to celebrate his own marriage is worked up by the Christian prophet into a prediction which leaves a richer and more eternal relation between Christ and his Bride than Paul has occasion to bring out in this prophecy. The apostle's thought appears to be that Jesus, who was the Christ of God for the sake of men, after finishing his redeeming work as Lord over sin and death, is now simply God's Son. In modern language, Paul would be stating that his Lordship is a phase of his eternal sonship, as his first mission on earth had been, although elsewhere, as in Phil. ii. 6–11, he seems to make the Lordship final.

Even in the latter passage, however, the final acclamation of Jesus as Lord is **to the glory of God the Father.** In the present prophecy also, as in Rom. xi. 36 (**all comes from God, all lives by him, all ends in him**), the apostle is true to the same conception of Jesus himself, whose faith was in what the Father would do through him as he acted in the Father's interests.

The wording of the sentence, due to the use of an inadequate messianic category, was so daring that later ages were troubled, but it breathes the truth that **God** is the first and last word in Christianity.

The general idea behind Paul's language is reflected in the traditional view preserved by the *Pirke Eliezer* (xi. 6), where ten kings are held to rule from one end of the world to another ; God is the first king, followed by Nimrod, Joseph, Solomon, Ahab, Nebuchadnezzar, Koresh (Cyrus), and Alexander of Macedon ; the ninth is King Messiah (Dan. ii. 35), and then the rule of the world goes back to the Lord, for the last king must be the first (Isa. xliv. 6 : ' thus saith the Lord, the king of Israel, I am the first and the last '). No one could be more convinced of the eternal meaning of Christ for Christians than Paul. This letter from beginning to end is alive with such a faith. Yet as the kingdom is the kingdom of God (verse 50), so the Church, which he had brought into being through Jesus Christ, is God's Church (i. 2, 9, xi. 22, etc.). **This is the God to whom you owe your being in Christ Jesus** ; **You belong to Christ, and Christ to God,** now and always ; **God is the head of Christ** (i. 30, iii. 23, xi. 3). If there was one form of later Christianity which by anticipation Paul repudiated instinctively (even in Col. iii. 11), it was the notion of a cult of Jesus the divine Lord as practically **everything to every** member, with some vague, mysterious idea of God in the background. Not that this risk of a one-sided devotion was entirely absent from Paul's age. The Corinthian church was surrounded by a religious life in which the mystery cults provided a devotional relief more adequate and intense than the traditional Greek religion. But one defect of these groups was that their devotions hardly ever included any serious reverence for a supreme, central deity over the universe, like Zeus. For ' God ' or a cosmic divinity the worshippers had as a rule little but a shadowy awe, if even that. Their fellowship gathered round their own favourite hero or divine figure, Æsculapius, Serapis, and so forth, to whom they offered passionate adoration and with whom they really felt at home, safe and sheltered in their special rites of communion. Beyond that, in most cases, there was not much more than an indefinite, numinous awe for any cosmic power or presence. Whereas the Christian worship was offered to God the Father and creator through Jesus Christ the Lord (viii. 6, etc.). The synthesis might be mysterious but it was there, at the heart of what Christians meant by God. No early Christians ever thought of Jesus as really their God, whatever were their glowing tributes of praise and prayer to him. Yet there was a subtle temptation, like that of the cults, to practise a one-sided devotion to the Lord Christ which would have shifted the centre of gravity in the faith by an absorption in Christ involving a bare and secondary recognition of God. To abandon the truths conveyed by the eschatological hope of the resurrection, for example, as this new theology of the spiritualists did, by concentrating interest upon some inward, semi-mystical experience of Christ in the soul which was not directly connected with the historical line of the faith, was to foster not only an undue individualism and a depreciation of the body, but also a form of Christ-mysticism which loosened the nexus between God and Christ, till God became less relevant and significant than Jesus the Lord for worship and action. Possibly Paul had a half-conscious instinct of this as he developed his argument for the resurrection at the present stage. At any rate his prophetic outlook reflects one of the signal services which he rendered to the Christianity of his day. Owing to his Hebrew training, he held his churches fast to the vital connexion between the religious experience and the moral life. But also, as he preached the rich and inward story of the Cross in his missions, while he eschewed any quest for a form of pagan ‘ enthusiasm ’ which sought direct union with God, he never dreamed of shifting the centre of gravity from the commanding thought of God the Father, and taught his Greek converts especially that the core of inner experience, for the next world as for the present, lay in being in or belonging to a Christ who himself belonged to God (iii. 23, xv. 23–28).

That seems to be the last word on the last things : ‘ God all in all.’ After this, would not anything be an anticlimax ? But Paul is not writing a literary essay ; he is counselling people in a serious, practical situation, who need to be plied with the truth. As he draws breath after this rhapsody, swept away by the prospect of what is to be the glorious sequel to the resurrection, he is again haunted by the thought of these Corinthians and their doubts. Once more, as in 12–19, he sets himself with urgent concern to show how absurd any disbelief in the resurrection is for Christians like themselves (29) or himself (30–32). 'Look at our way of life; it implies faith in the resurrection. Wake up from this delusion and dream of a bodiless immortality, to realize the reality of God (33–34)!'

29 **Otherwise, if there is no such thing as a resurrection, what is the meaning of people getting baptized on behalf of their dead? If dead men do not rise at all, why do people get baptized**
30 **on their behalf? Yes, and why am I myself in danger**
31 **every hour? (Not a day but I am at death's door! I swear it by my pride in you, brothers, through Christ Jesus our**
32 **Lord.) What would it avail me that, humanly speaking, I 'fought with wild beasts' at Ephesus? If dead men do not rise,** ***let us eat and drink, for we will be dead to-morrow!***

29 Some Christians at Corinth got specially **baptized on behalf of** loved ones who had died. Why? To fill up the number of the elect (Rev. vi. 11, Fourth Esdras iv. 35 f.), as it was the apocalyptic belief that until this was complete the End could not come? 'May it please thee of thy gracious goodness,' so the collect of the English prayer-book runs, 'shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect and to hasten thy kingdom.' This is not impossible, but the obscure allusion points probably to an intense concern for fellowship which made some members of the local church seek to do something for friends and kindred who had died prematurely, i.e. before being able to receive baptism. How readily such a feeling could enter deep faith in the resurrection may be seen from a curious story told in 2 Macc. xii. 39 f. Judas Maccabæus had sacrifice offered on behalf of some of his dead soldiers who were found on the battlefield wearing under their shirts forbidden amulets. To atone for their sin, the survivors made sacrifice. As was

natural, the historian observes; for 'all saw at once that this was why they fell' (an illustration of what lies behind 1 Cor. xi. 30), and their grieved comrades sought to do something for them, 'bearing in mind the resurrection—for had the fallen not been expected to rise again, it would have been superfluous and silly to pray for the dead.' No Christian would have dreamed of offering sacrifice for the departed, but evidently some believed so firmly in the resurrection that they underwent a vicarious baptism for **their dead** who had not been more than catechumens when they died. **Otherwise,** as Paul reminds them, had they disbelieved in the resurrection, this would have emptied their pious rite of all meaning. The eschatological tension, coupled with the strong sense of solidarity (vii. 14) in the Household of God, may account for this practice of baptism by proxy. It left traces on some fringes of early Christian piety during the second century where similar rites were observed, as among the Marcionites, some gnostics, and the Montanists; it survives among the Mormons. Originally it was a naïve, devout expression of the unity which bound members on earth and which the living sought to ensure beyond death. It does not seem needful (with Dr. Schweitzer) to connect it closely with the fear of some, e.g. at Thessalonica (1 Thess. iv. 13), that those who died before the second coming would be less near the Lord than those who survived, as though the Corinthians got **baptized for their dead** simply to make sure that they would be raised with the surviving, instead of having to wait for the second, general resurrection. All we need to presuppose is that husbands, wives, or children thus underwent baptism for the eternal good of dear ones who for some reason had not on earth been able to attain personal baptism for themselves.

Look at my own life too, the life of your apostle, with its 30
dreadful, daily dangers (iv. 9–12). Meaningless if dead men do
not rise! 'I die daily' is not to be spiritualized into an inward
dying to self and the world; it is a strong, literal statement of
the perils he underwent (2 Cor. xi. 23 f.). '**I am at death's door** 31
every hour. That's as true as the fond **pride** I have in you, my
own church' (iv. 15). Combats with wild beasts were not 32

provincial displays as a rule, but enacted in the Roman amphitheatre, so that **at Ephesus** probably belongs to a metaphorical statement. It does not indeed follow that Paul could not have fought as a *bestiarius*, since he was a Roman citizen ; there were cases of aristocrats who were forced to give such dangerous and disgraceful exhibitions ; one of the most notorious being that of Acilius Glabrio, who had to fight with a lion and a couple of bears in Domitian's private amphitheatre. Yet Paul does not mean, ' even if I fought with wild beasts in the arena, risking my life in this ferocious struggle as a man might ' (i.e. to win money or applause or freedom). He is speaking vividly and metaphorically (as in iv. 15) of *bestiarii*, as **humanly speaking** indicates. The figure had a local appeal, for such cruel, bloody exhibitions were specially popular at Corinth (see p. xviii). Only the hope of the resurrection explained his readiness to meet fearful trials and desperate crises in the course of his life and work for the Lord. Wild brutes of men sometimes attacked him. Of one such crisis we overhear an echo, perhaps **at Ephesus** itself, in Rom. xvi. 3 (2 Cor. i. 8–9, Acts xx. 19). He is writing here with lyric passion, and this accounts for the strong description of mob-violence which befell a man like himself, who was liable to murderous attacks from the Jews as a renegade no less than from an infuriated pagan populace. Even the gentle Philo of Alexandria (*Spec. Leg.* i. 9, 58) urged Jews who loved God to prove their faith by lynching apostates without mercy, when they had the opportunity.

It is only in the light of this passionate outburst (as in 19) that the concluding cry becomes intelligible. **If dead men do not rise**, if there is nothing after death, then *let us eat and drink, for we will be dead to-morrow !* He knew from the Book of Wisdom (ii. 1 f.) the Epicurean sceptic's word, ' let us have a good time here, a merry-making, since death is the end of life,' but this is a phrase from his favourite book of Isaiah (xxii. 13) about desperate Jews who cried out during a siege. It is flung out with intense feeling ; once the resurrection hope is removed, life loses all its meaning and purpose ! This is the Paul who declared that for him **life** meant **Christ** (Phil. i. 21). Cool moderns complain that surely he must have forgotten himself. Has life no moral duty if Christ has not risen? Does goodness depend absolutely upon belief in the resurrection? Sixty years ago, in a lecture on 'The First and the Last Catastrophe,' as Professor W. K. Clifford discussed recent speculations about the end of physical life on our planet, he concluded that since the world was to destroy life we must make the best of it. 'Beyond that, we do not know and we ought not to care. Do I seem to say, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die"? Far from it; on the contrary I say, "Let us take hands and help, for this day we are alive together."' A noble stoical affirmation. But this is an attitude which Paul could not have understood. He could not detach himself from his religious faith. He is not discussing the relations of religion and morality, much less trying to conceive life abstractly, apart from Christ his Lord, but pouring his soul out on what lay nearest to his heart. All went to dust and ashes, he dares to say, if the hope of life with the Lord was taken away. So convinced he was that life had no meaning whatsoever apart from the revelation of Christ, with its promise of life beyond death, that it was absolutely impossible for him to contemplate any value or hope for existence outside this. Separate life from God, from God in Jesus Christ, he passionately cries, and you rob it of all significance. So far from forgetting himself, he was remembering and reasserting, with every fibre of his being, the truth that meant literally everything to him in the realm of thought and action.

After this, the second (12–19) *reductio ad absurdum* argument, a word of direct counsel follows (33, 34).

Make no mistake about this: 'bad company is the ruin of good 33
character.' Regain your sober senses and avoid sin, for 34
some of you—and I say this to your shame—some of you
are insensible to God.

Dangerous characters, these doubters of the resurrection; 33
keep clear of them, for their wrong opinions are infectious! He had argued in v. 6, 7 for the excommunication of a gross offender against morals; here (as in v. 11) he seems to demand no more than avoidance of such doubters, citing a popular tag

from one of Menander's comedies. The deteriorating influence of **bad company** was widely recognized. Thus, in speaking of Catiline and his associates, Sallust (*Catil.* xiv.) remarks that 'if any respectable character came into touch with him, daily intercourse with the gang and with the allurements of vice
34 readily made the man as bad as the others.' **Regain your sober senses** includes not only the doubters themselves (verse 12), but those who made the **mistake** of supposing that one could associate with them without deterioration. **Some of you** have not the 'knowledge of God' or **are insensible to God.** In this trenchant phrase, he uses with great effect a special Greek term which in Stoical morals implied that men were responsible for their knowledge or their ignorance of the deity, and that this 'knowledge' was a saving order or method of life. To lack this was to be morally **insensible** to what promoted the interests of personality and particularly immortality. It amounted to impiety, just as 'knowledge' was a revelation from above. You are so sensible? Yes, and so insensible! **Insensible to God** is an idiomatic equivalent to 'you will not recognize him,' 'you ignore him.' Possibly there is also an echo of current mystical teaching, such as emerges in the Egyptian *Hermetica* (vii. 1) where such ignorance of the deity becomes a positive addiction to material things, an intoxicating devotion to low pleasures and passions, from which the soul is bidden 'stand erect, regain your sober senses.' Upholders of what Paul viewed as the wrong belief in immortality might be described as failing to understand the full power of God, since God was pre-eminently **the God who raised the Lord** and who **will also raise us by his power** (vi. 14, etc.). The apostle is following the line of Jesus, who had told doubters of the resurrection that they went wrong because they understood **neither the scriptures nor the power of God** (Mark xii. 24). Any real sense of God, such as Christians ought to possess, carried with it the conviction that he had the power of raising from the dead. When some of the Corinthians thought that doubts of the resurrection were the mark of an awakened insight into the spiritual life, Paul's reply to them and their sympathizers was that such notions were a mere

dream; more than that, they were not to be considered as merely speculative opinions, for they undermined the moral basis of the faith, forming as it were an inclined plane down into positive sin, such as every right-minded Christian ought to avoid. 'Wake right up!' Luther's translation, is happy and idiomatic ('*Wachet recht auf!*'); the Greek adverb (*dikaiôs*) might well have its colloquial meaning of 'as is right' or 'as is proper.' A full faith in God's power of raising from the dead is the sane, sober attitude of the Christian soul.

This power is shown in God's provision of a true, new embodiment for the spirits of the faithful in the resurrection (35–49). The first movement of the next lyrical rhapsody is on the theme, **God gives a body as he pleases,** and it is a spiritual body (35–44); the second starts from Scripture as it connects this body with the risen Christ (45–49).

But, someone will ask, 'how do the dead rise? What kind of 35
body have they when they come?' Foolish man! What 36
you sow never comes to life unless it dies. And what you 37
sow is not the body that is to be; it is a mere grain of wheat,
for example, or some other seed. God gives it a body as he 38
pleases, gives each kind of seed a body of its own. Flesh is 39
not all the same; there is human flesh, there is flesh of
beasts, flesh of birds, and flesh of fish. There are heavenly 40
bodies and also earthly bodies, but the splendour of the
heavenly is one thing and the splendour of the earthly is
another; there is a splendour of the sun and a splendour 41
of the moon and a splendour of the stars—for one star
differs from another in splendour. So with the resurrection 42
of the dead:

what is sown is mortal,
what rises is immortal;
sown inglorious, 43
it rises in glory;
sown in weakness,
it rises in power;
sown an animate body, 44
it rises a spiritual body.

35 The details of the resurrection had been discussed by rabbinical authorities like Hillel and Shammai. But the **kind of body** or bodily form given to the saints occupies a contemporary prophet like the writer of the Apocalypse of Baruch (xlix.–l.). 'In what shape will those live who live in Thy day? Will they resume this present form?' The answer is, 'The earth shall make no change in their form, but as it has received so shall it restore them' (i.e. in order that they may be recognized), though after a while the good are gradually transformed into the star-like splendour of the angels. A younger contemporary of Paul, Rabbi Eliezer, once pointed to the variety of forms in
37 which a bare, naked seed appeared above the earth, in proof of the thesis that 'the dead will all rise in their shrouds,' instead of naked (as some rabbis believed). Paul soars above such
36 matter-of-fact applications in his use of the seed analogy. The body **sown** at birth is **not the body that is to be** ours in the resurrection; it is very different. What a contrast between what **you sow** (the **you** is emphatic) and what God gives later to the same spirit—as he does in vegetation, for example!
38 There the vital germ is placed in a soil of being where inevitably it alters its form as it rises into the upper air. Only, Paul does not say that it alters; he makes **God**, as usual (i. 21, xii. 11, 18), the sovereign giver of the new form. What he has in mind is the Hellenistic ideal of immortality without any 'body.' Plato's supreme hope had been a state of existence after death 'when the soul is by itself, apart from the body' (*Phædo*, lxvi.). It was an idealistic hope which had even affected a holiness movement in Judaism like that of the Essenes, who looked forward to disembodied souls as the finest prospect of eternal life. Paul's hope is for an order of being in which the spirit is
39 endowed by God with 'a body.' Why should that be thought impossible, when under God there were already so many varieties of 'bodies' in the universe? He uses **flesh** in a very free way here for substance or nature, and throws in the remark
40 about differences in glory or splendour between the **heavenly bodies** and the **earthly**, because he has in mind the coming contrast between the animate and the spiritual body. Probably,
41 too, the remark about **one star** differing **from another** in glory

is an echo not only of the apocalyptic idea that the stars were
angelic beings, but also of his belief in the varying nature of
recompense for the shining spirits of the faithful (iii. 8), whose
radiance, as again the Baruch apocalypse has it (li. 3, 9 f.),
varies like that of the stars in the ageless, upper world (Dan. xii.
3). Instead of saying that ' man is born,' he carries on his meta- 42
phor of the human seed being **sown,** and concludes the lyrical
description with an antithesis which starts the next movement,
i.e. between the **animate body** and the **spiritual.** ' Natural ' 43, 44
(see on ii. 14) does not represent the meaning of the Greek,
which is a body possessed by the lower psyche, answering to
its needs and no more, just as **spiritual** does not mean a body
composed of spirit, but one which answers to the vital functions
of the spirit, forming a complete embodiment of the divine
nature.

The argument implies that to be **sown** is to be born, not to be buried ; Paul did not consider that physical death was the necessary prelude to the resurrection. The seed of mankind is dropped into the present material order, which is mortal, corruptible (as in 2 Cor. iv. 16, Rom. viii. 21), and corrupting ; but in the new, risen order of being, which is **imperishable** and free from corruption (verse 50), it acquires a fresh form, which does not correspond to the **animate body** of the previous existence. He is working with a traditional rabbinic analogy between the seed of man and the seeds of plants in this connexion, in order to present his own conception of **a spiritual body,** a conception which at the same time refutes the twofold Greek idea of immortality as essentially bodiless and also as an inherent quality or capacity of the human soul.

This is the fourth exposition of body in the epistle. The picturesque allusion to what we, like the ancients, naturally call the **heavenly bodies** of the sun, moon, and stars, is Hellenic. Here **body** means shape, form or the outward being of life, even of non-human life, for these celestial bodies were supposed to be alive. Indeed Paul implies that **flesh** or substance, as we moderns call it, within the entire organic world of plants as well as of men, takes form or **body.** So far, there is nothing novel or characteristic. But **spiritual body** is a coinage of his own, struck out of his belief in the Spirit, and in the Spirit as forming an ethereal **glory** or divine being of its own for the personality which was possessed by the Lord or Spirit. It is a semi-metaphysical term, essential to his view of the risen life as neither pure spirit nor wrapped in a crudely material shape, neither disembodied nor yet embodied, as current rabbinic speculation imagined, in a replica of the present physical constitution. In speaking of the solidarity of **Christ** and of **all who belong to Christ** (in 20–28), he did not require to use the body metaphor as he had done in xii. 12–30. Here he employs the concept in an unparalleled sense for the personality of the Christian after death. It was a startling challenge to those who saw no alternative to the 'flesh and blood' resurrection of popular Judaism (which meant the reunion of soul and body), except in some adaptation of the purely immaterial Greek idea. At the heart of Paul's thought is the affirmation that the life of Christians after death must continue to possess the capacities for action and affection, insight and understanding (xiii. 12) which in the present body have a real though limited range. The **spiritual,** in other words, is not the immaterial. The **animate body,** with its functions for maintaining and continuing human existence (see vi. 13, xv. 50) is a **flesh and blood** existence for which there is no further need in the life eternal; but **a body** of some sort, as the medium of expression for the **spiritual** personality with its high aspirations and affections and enjoyment of the Spirit in fellowship with God and his saints, is vital. The **animate body** itself, as a shrine of the Spirit (vi. 19), provided for this already. But such a partial and imperfect provision would one day be replaced by a complete embodiment.

On its nature Paul does not speculate. He speaks of this organic individuality sometimes as **full sonship** (Rom. viii. 11, 17), but even in the most explicit allusion (Phil. iii. 21, **the Lord Jesus Christ will transform the body that belongs to our low estate till it resembles the body of his Glory**) there is a noticeable reserve. The change (verse 52) may be connected with the inward renewal of the Christian personality or real self at present (vi. 19 f., 2 Cor. iv. 16), but how the **spiritual**

body came into existence, and how it corresponded to the risen body of Christ, Paul never explains, any more than he explains the first creation of man. The creation of the first man had been an Act of God, raising him from a lower to a higher order of animate being, above the animals, in which he was designed to come under God's promises and laws. So with the change into a spiritual body ; it was also a wonder, a sheer change wrought by the same God. Paul leaves this truth as it stands, though, with a stroke of his profound religious genius, which at this point, as at so many others, has been often missed by theological as well as by popular Christianity, he repudiates any notion of a material identity between the present and the future body. **We shall all be changed** or transformed. While there is to be a vital change, there is continuity of spirit or personality ; and the change is not from life in a body to life without a body, but from spirit in one type of body to spirit in another. The seed analogy, though picturesque, was not a perfect illustration of this change, for a seed does not die, strictly speaking ; the plant is simply another form of the same seed. Yet the point of the analogy is plain (36–38). It is not to be elaborated into any modern idea of an evolution or development of the present spirit into its immortal form. Paul's supreme interest does lie in the continuity of the human soul or personality, but in this parable from nature it is the divine wonder of the change that is uppermost for him. **God,** God by his own power, brings it to pass, **gives a spiritual** no less than an animate **body as he pleases.** The End will resemble the beginning of God's dealing with man.

It is an indication of how little the mystery cults appealed to contemporary Christians at Corinth that the idea of reincarnation, which was so marked a feature of the Orphic cult, as well as of Pythagorean philosophy, does not seem to have made any appeal to the local intelligentzia. Their religious idealism rested on the Greek mystical antipathy to the body in any quest for divine union. As the Stoic eschatology, with its belief in successive cycles of fiery destruction and periodic recovery befalling the world, never appealed to any Christian mind in these days, neither did reincarnation. It is not likely that the enlightened at Corinth even held a doctrine of impersonal immortality such as the Platonists and the Stoics propounded; their faith was in personal immortality, not in the soul being re-absorbed into the divine life after death, nor in the present body as a mere vehicle for the impersonal monad of the spirit. Like Paul himself, they may have believed that God would be 'all in all' (verse 28), though not of course in any sense of the perfect, eternal state being one which blurred personal identity or one which was a vague, shimmering, undifferentiated existence (see on verse 28 and xiii. 12). The apostle's chief charge against them is that God could not be 'all in all' on the premisses of their religious logic, and that **a spiritual body**, such as could be attained only through organic connexion with the risen Lord, was essential to such a glorious hope.

This connexion he now proceeds to explain (45–49), appealing once more to his fundamental authority in the story of Creation.

45 **As there is an animate body, so there is a spiritual body. Thus it is written,**
'*The* first *man*, Adam, *became an animate being*,
the last Adam a life-giving Spirit';
46 **but the animate, not the spiritual, comes first,**
and only then the spiritual.
47 ***Man* the first *is from the earth, material;***
Man the second is from heaven.
48 **As Man the material is, so are the material;**
as Man the heavenly is, so are the heavenly.
49 **Thus, as we have borne the likeness of material Man,**
so we are to bear the likeness of the heavenly Man.

45 As in Matt. v. 43, the citation of a text is completed by supplying its opposite. The words of Gen. ii. 7, *man became* a living soul (psyche) or person (i.e. *an animate being*), were not much discussed by rabbis, but they had started speculation in Hellenistic Judaism, possibly under Iranian influence, about

the two Men in the dual stories of creation. Thus in Philo we overhear an interpretation of some *haggada* which contrasted the ideal **first Man** with the mortal **second** ; the first, created in God's own likeness (Gen. i. 27) corresponds to Plato's ideal Man, spiritual and immortal, i.e. the genus as conceived in the divine mind, while the second, the historical Adam (of Gen. ii. 7, with his descendants), answers to the person of *material* man, made *from the earth* and modelled after the first. If this speculation ever occurred to Paul, he reverses it, not on any speculative ground, but owing to the facts of revelation in history and providence. He interprets Gen. ii. 7 in the light of the messianic hope, not of metaphysics, though a metaphysic of being is implicit in his statement. Thinking not simply of the pre-existent messiah, but of the current Jewish notion of Adam as the original, ideal man, whose lost glory was to be restored by messiah (ii. 7, 8), he coins the title of **the last Adam,** in order of historic time and succession. Jews spoke of the 'first man,' Adam, but never of a **second** Adam, as the apostle did. For Paul, Christ is not the primal Man of Iranian or Philonic speculation on the cosmos, but One who has towards the End entered history, as the Lord of glory, in order to inaugurate the new order of being. Instead of equating this second Man with the first, he presses the unique function of the heavenly Man for mankind. Men would die in their mortality, were it not for the new Act and Order of God which, in Christ, the **life-giving Spirit,** restores and completes man's destiny.
As Adam was **animate** or *material,* in the sense of being made 46
out of earth, the second Man is **heavenly,** or, as it is put else- 47
where, he was originally divine by nature, 'in the form of
God.' As descendants of Adam we all have the human exis- 48
tence that man shares with men. Those who **are heavenly** are
those who **belong to Christ** (verse 23), possessing what he alone
can give, the life of the Spirit, which at the resurrection
acquires its full expression in **the likeness of the heavenly Man.** 49
To 'bear the likeness' of anyone was to share or reproduce his nature. By a not uncommon slip (mistaking *phoresomen* for *phoresômen*), some early editors of the text turned the ringing prophecy **we are to bear** into a pious exhortation, 'let us bear,'

forgetting that this change is accomplished by God (verse 53), not an achievement of man. The alteration unfortunately slipped into the Vulgate ; as usual Tyndale was the first to put the English versions on the right line. **The likeness** (as in Rom. viii. 29) is expected at the resurrection, since Christ's full power of life had itself come into force at his resurrection (Rom. i. 4). It is implied elsewhere that Christ was indeed at the creation of the world (viii. 6), and that as **life-giving Spirit** he is in a real sense active, prior even to the resurrection of the dead ; but the chief interest of the apostle at this point is to maintain the final triumph over death which completes God's purpose in the first Adam, rather than to bring out (as in Romans) the reversal of Adam's disobedience with its ill effects for the race.

This may be the reason why he omits any mention of the last judgement, if, as some think, he retained such a conception at all. Judaism held various views about a general resurrection ; some believed it was a resuscitation of all men, which formed a prelude to the judgement of gentiles and Israel, while others confined it to the just. At any rate Paul is not sketching a programme of the End, even in its messianic outlook ; the apocalyptic mind of primitive Christians who dealt with the future was always imaginative, not fanciful but free, bent on flashing this or that authentic truth upon the soul rather than on constructing any definite synthesis. Paul catches up metaphors and ideas for his immediate purpose of exalting the victory of Christ in terms of some current messianic categories, fusing them, as best he can, into a glowing vision of the End. The climax is now presented in 50–57.

50 **I tell you this, my brothers, flesh and blood cannot inherit the Realm of God, nor can the perishing inherit the imperish-**
51 **able. Here is a secret truth for you : not all of us are to die,**
52 **but all of us are to be changed—changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet-call. The trumpet will sound, the dead will rise imperishable, and we**
53 **shall be changed. For this perishing body must be invested with the imperishable, and this mortal body invested with**

immortality ; and when this mortal body has been invested with immortality, then the saying of Scripture will be realized, 54

Death is swallowed up in victory.
O Death, where is your victory ? 55
O Death, where is your sting ?

The victory is ours, thank God ! He makes it ours by our Lord Jesus Christ. 57

Flesh and blood (as in Gal. i. 16) means human nature as opposed to the divine. In the next life, Paul had told sympathizers with Greek mysticism, there must be a ‘ body ’ of some kind for the spirit of man. Now he insists (with reference to the Jewish belief) that this ‘ body ’ cannot be the present body. On any nexus between the present physical frame and the spiritual body the apostle never speculates. There will be a change, a transformation of our being, but it is the glorious triumph thus gained over death that thrills him, and on personal data he does not stop to dwell. All he urges—and for him it is everything—is that the change by which Christians pass into God's realm of immortal bliss, beyond the fear and force of Death, is God's own doing (57).

51 This is the second of three revelations which Paul claims to have received upon the life beyond death. The first he reports as an intuition ‘ by the word of the Lord ’ (1 Thess. iv. 15 f.) ; he speaks as the Lord had spoken to himself. Here, as in the third (Rom. xi. 25 f.), he calls the revelation a ‘ mystery ’ or **secret truth,** a special prediction or prophetic word over and above the general secret purpose of the gospel (ii. 1) ; it might be said more accurately that, while it does fulfil a word of God in **Scripture** (verse 54), this revelation belongs to **God's secret truths** which he felt commissioned to impart to the Church (iv. 1), as in virtue of his prophetic gift he was enabled to **fathom all mysteries and secret lore** (xiii. 2). The second of the revelations is not a forecast of human destiny like the third. It is closer to the first in its concentration upon the relation between Christians and the resurrection, though, unlike the first, it mentions the change to be undergone. ‘ So shall we be

ever with the Lord' answers to 'God giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ'; the final bliss is the outcome of the Christians' tie to the risen Lord. Both the first and the second are in line here. But, while Paul had already spoken of the Lord's activity in this era (24 f.), he is now absorbed in God's supreme design of overcoming death. It is all the doing of God, his final gift (i. 4, xii. 7, 8) to Christians.

Before long the opening sentence was altered. Some misunderstood the words, as though the apostle intended **all of us** to include sinners as well as Christians; also it was felt that, as Paul himself had died, he must have been mistaken if he wrote the words as they stand. Two special attempts were therefore made to smooth out the text. One change, which can be traced in Palestine and Egypt before the end of the second century, transferred the negative to the second clause: 'we are all to die, but we are not all to be changed.' Slightly later, Latin versions of the third century in Italy or North Africa, read 'we shall all arise, but we shall not all be changed.' Attempts, however well-meaning, to improve upon the text of a classic generally end in sands of the commonplace; both of these alterations erred, by imagining that Paul thought of a general resurrection, by reducing **a secret truth** to what is no more than a platitude, and by failing to provide any adequate sequel to **changed.** The second of the emendations, which used 'rise' in a sense never employed by the apostle, unluckily made its way into the Vulgate, so that scholars from Augustine to Aquinas failed to recognize that Paul really wrote: **not all of us** (Christians) **are to die** (i.e. some of us will be awake in life when the End arrives), **but all of us** (whether dead then or alive) **are to be changed.** He is expanding what he had already said in 22, 23: **all who belong to Christ shall be made alive at his arrival.**

52 Thinking in apocalyptic terms of the End, where trumpets sounded to awaken the dead or to rally the living loyalists, he speaks of **the last** summons from God as sudden and instantaneous; the resurrection is accomplished by God's power **in a moment,** instead of being any long-drawn-out process of reanimation for dead corpses of the faithful. Then, using freely

some abstract terms of Hellenistic Judaism, he mentions for the first and the only time **immortality**, a catchword of the gnostic 53 liberals at Corinth in their theosophy. It was a word common in Greek Jews like Philo and the writer of the Wisdom of Solomon (*God created man for immortality and made him the likeness of his own being; but by the envy of the devil death entered the world, and those who belong to the devil's party experience death:* ii. 23, 24); literally it is 'incorruption,' but the idea is eternal duration or indestructible existence. What is 'immortal' called up in the mind associations which were practically the same as those of what is 'imperishable,' and they amount to an equivalent for **glory** (ii. 7) in this connexion (40–43). The metaphor of being clothed or **invested** with immortality, so familiar in the *Hermetica* and the Jewish apocalypses as well as in Indian and Persian religion, carries on the thought of wearing or bearing **the likeness of the heavenly Man** (49). Paul reverts to this in 2 Cor. v. 1–5 (with its shudder at the very notion of a naked, disembodied spirit). At present it is merely a passing touch as he hints what real 54 **immortality** means for Christians, i.e. an embodiment. He hurries forward to his immediate object, a description of the decisive permanence of this position won for the saints, recalling two passages of prophetic Scripture, which he fuses freely together. The first is from an apocalyptic piece (Isa. xxv. 8) on the complete annihilation of death at the high triumph of God. No more need to mourn, for death is then to be abolished for ever by God—so he read in his Greek Bible. The sense of the original is better represented by **death shall be no more** (Rev. xxi. 4), but the Hebrew word 'for ever' had been mistaken for 'victory' by some Aramaic version which underlies a Greek version like that of Aquila and Theodotion (see on xiv. 23). Hence the Hebrew phrase lay before Paul in this fine mistranslation of **Death is swallowed up in victory.** So deeply did 55 the thought of **victory** possess his mind that he introduced it into his own rendering of another prophetic word. He took the prediction of Hosea xiv. 14 as an expression of triumph over death with its destructive power, whereas the original was a vivid call to Death to do its very worst on impenitent

Ephraim. 'Come, death, with your plagues! Come, deathland, with your pestilence!' The Septuagint had read *dikê*, a word for penalty or claim to rule, instead of 'plagues,' and **sting** instead of 'pestilence.' Paul freely renders the whole passage to suit his purpose, deliberately leaving out the personified Hades or deathland (a term which he never employs) and substituting victory (*nikos*, a form of *nikê* or victory) for *dikê*. A modern reader notes such curious verbal details, as he does similar items in a rapt utterance of Dante or Milton, but he is more conscious of the stream surging through the words. This passage is indeed what Pindar, in celebrating feats of athletes at the races (ix. 24) on the Isthmus, would have
57 called a song of victory, an *epinicion*. Only, it does not celebrate the victory gained by Christians over death. 'Thanks be to God who giveth us this victory!'—an anticipation of the deep ecstasy in Rom. viii. 37 f., where he hints that **victory** is almost too poor a term for such an experience.

56 After **sting** some words were added by way of explanation, either by an editor of the text or perhaps by Paul himself upon the margin; **the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law.** They are a prose comment which could not have occurred to him in the passionate rush of triumphal conviction. Behind them lies the belief which is argued in Rom. v. 12–21. Sin is **the sting of death**, not because it is sin that makes death a bitter pang, but because it produces death, spurring or goading death on to its mortal stroke against men. Were it not for sin, Paul means, death could not reach us. What some rabbis attributed to the evil impulse or tendency in man, which was connected with the destroying angel or even Satan, is attributed by Paul to Sin, with its allied dæmonic ally Death, striking and stabbing fatally at the very heart of man throughout the ages. Here the expression is, we might say, more psychological than mythological, as he proceeds to call **the Law the strength of sin,** meaning that the consciousness of God's Law stirred impulses to the wrongdoing (so in Rom. vii. 7 f.) that exposed men to death's penalty. The implication is, 'get rid of sin, and death loses its power, or rather ceases to be,' since for him death is the loss of all that

gives life its value and makes it worth living. The first deathblow to death on behalf of Christians was struck at the resurrection hour of the **Lord Jesus Christ**; the second and final blow is struck as we are raised by God through the same Lord. When Paul wrote, **the strength of sin is the Law** or the Torah, it would be too much to suppose that he was consciously opposing the rabbinic claim that 'the Torah is the power of the Lord.' But in the rest of the passage, as elsewhere (see pp. xxii., 51, 120), he does posit for Christ what rabbinic teaching claimed for the sacred Torah as the revelation of God's will, by which the world was made and salvation guaranteed for the People in the next world, as healing for this world and hope for the world to come. All was achieved **by** means of **our Lord Jesus Christ,** not by the Torah.

With the prospect of this glad change at the End, however, Christians must allow no change in their immediate conviction of the risen Lord, nor must they idly await release from the evil present; instead of any private enjoyment of the great hope, let them be active in the service of the living Lord within the fellowship (58).

Well then, my beloved brothers, hold your ground, immovable; 58
abound in work for the Lord at all times, for you may be sure that in the Lord your labour is never thrown away.

While some Christians in the north had allowed enthusiasm over the imminent End to excite and disturb life, the Corinthians, unlike the Thessalonians, had been disturbed by questions of belief rather than by feverish anticipations. In view of what he has just been urging, Paul bids them remain **immovable.** The word, which he never uses anywhere else, is 58
a favourite term of Aristotle, when he is insisting on moral actions being the outcome of conscious, steady character. 'In the case of moral excellence a man must know what he is doing, then he must choose to do it and to do it for its own sake, and finally his action must express a stable, immovable character' (*Nikomachean Ethics*, ii. 4). A settled belief leads to active service of some kind **for the Lord,** which is not fitful but steady.

Again, such Christian activity implies convictions. To become unsettled about belief in the resurrection would take the heart out of any effort; love's labour would be **thrown away** (the same term as go **for nothing** in verse 10), if the faith which inspires it had no basis. 'What would be the use of thoughtful, dutiful care for Christian character in yourselves and others, such as I have been urging (iv. 5, viii. 1, x. 24, 31, xii. 7 f.), if **your footing in the gospel** (xv. 1) is shaken?' By **work** is meant (as in xvi. 10) the upbuilding of the Church, where God is himself active (iii. 9). Paul is still (see p. 225) confident and convinced that below any doubts and divergencies in the community lies a profound devotion to the Lord. He loves them for it.

THE EPILOGUE
(xvi.)

One labour of love now occurs to his mind, the subscription on behalf of the Jerusalem saints. The church may have consulted him about this in their letter, or recent visitors from Corinth may have enquired what he wanted done and how. At any rate it belonged to his plans for revisiting the church, on which he now wishes to say a word (xi. 34). This relief fund occupies a large section of a later letter (2 Cor. viii.–ix.), and it comes up again at the close of Romans. Here he confines himself to a couple of financial details (xvi. 1–4).

xvi.

1 **With regard to the collection for the saints, you must carry out the same arrangements as I made for the churches of**
2 **Galatia. On the first day of the week, let each of you put aside a sum from his weekly gains, so that the money may**
3 **not have to be collected when I come. On my arrival I will furnish credentials for those whom you select, and send**
4 **them to convey your bounty to Jerusalem; if the sum makes it worth my while to go too, they shall accompany me.**

Some of the Corinthians would be familiar with club-subscriptions, more or less voluntary assessments for social rather

than for charitable purposes ; but Paul, who had already put
this matter of **the collection** before the church at Corinth, uses 1
a term common in papyri and in inscriptions for religious funds raised to promote the worship of some god or temple. There is evidence (collected by Deissmann in his *Light from the Ancient East,* pp. 361 f.) to suggest that Sebastê, the emperor's birthday, may have been regarded as a favourite day for making payments of a religious character. But in organizing the fund and repeating what he had orally told the Galatians, Paul is carrying on the Jewish practice of making the community, as well as individuals, responsible for charity, and he fixes the
weekly day of worship, which had superseded the sabbath. He 2
does not call it 'the Lord's day,' as the later prophet John does (in Rev. i. 10), but **the first day of the week,** sacred as the day when the Lord rose from the dead, and when Christians joyfully broke bread together. At an early period collections for the poor were made at the eucharist, as part of the offering sacrificed to the Lord. A century later, Justin (*Apol.* i. 67) tells how 'each member who is well-to-do and willing gives as he pleases, and the amount is deposited with the presiding minister.' It is generally assumed that such was the arrangement intended by Paul, though he does not confine subscriptions to the prosperous ; every member is to have the privilege of putting weekly **aside a sum,** 'as God hath prospered him,' i.e. **from his gains** (as in Acts xi. 29 **the disciples put aside money, as each of them could afford it, for a contribution to be sent to the brothers in Judea**). It may be that the sums were brought to the Sunday service. But, according to Chrysostom, 'Paul says, Let each lay by him in store, not, Let him bring it to church, lest one might feel ashamed of offering a small sum. . . . He says, For the present, lay it up at home—and so make your home a church.' The phrase 'lay by him' (*chez lui*, in French) need not mean more than this, and, although Chrysostom's reason is too fine-spun, his explanation of the text may not be inaccurate ; possibly Paul agreed with the school of Shammai that no alms should be handled at worship. It is plain, at least, that he desired the collection to be not only spontaneous but systematic. There was to be no hurrying to

gather funds when he arrived, no last-minute rush to get subscriptions in. He would have **everything** in this business also **done in order** (xiv. 40), exactly as he had already instructed the Christians in Galatia. The annual poll-tax levied on every male Jew over twenty, for the upkeep of the temple, was gathered at various centres and then transmitted by responsible commis-
3 sioners to Jerusalem. Paul adopts a similar custom for what he calls the 'liberality' or **bounty** of the Corinthians; it is (as more than once in 2 Cor. viii.–ix.) the Greek word *charis*, or 'grace,' used in its special sense of generous favour, or kind, delightful boon. As yet he seems undecided whether he will
4 travel himself to Jerusalem. He will only give the Corinthian commissioners his company if the sum subscribed by the church's **bounty** is no mean trifle. The Galatian contribution appears to have been independently transmitted to Jerusalem, for he never alludes to it in his final arrangements for forwarding what Macedonia and Achaia raised.

In a subsequent appeal (2 Cor. viii. 18–21) he mentions his reason for being scrupulous about this financial transaction. An appeal for charity is not likely to succeed unless people are sure that the object is good and that the funds will be properly handled. The latter point alone is before his mind at present. 'We are cheerful in giving,' Calvin comments, 'when we feel certain that what we give will be handled aright.' But even here Paul does not go further than to assure the church that its own representatives will have charge of the money. He does not mean to take the credit of the subscription away from the Corinthians; they need not be afraid of that! But he has his personal dignity too. It is not, 'I shall accompany your representatives, instead of merely giving them a letter,' but '**they shall accompany me.**' However, 'speaking of **my arrival,** let me tell you my plans and movements for the time being' (5–8).

5 **I mean to visit you after my tour in Macedonia, for I am going**
6 **to make a tour through Macedonia. The chances are, I shall spend some time with you, possibly even pass the winter with you, so that you may speed me forward on any**

**journey that lies before me. I do not care about seeing you 7
at this moment, merely in the by-going; my hope is to
stay among you for some time, with the Lord's permission. 8
I am staying on for the present at Ephesus till Pentecost, for 9
I have wide opportunities here for active service—and there
are many to thwart me.**

The 'pass through' of the English versions does not represent the full sense of the Greek, which refers to a long-deferred **tour** of supervision through the churches of the Macedonian mission at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berœa. Still, it is only a tour. The Corinthians must not suspect him of neglecting them for mission-fields like **Macedonia** and Asia; his plans are still vague, more vague than when he came to write Rom. xv. 24, but his **hope**, his real interest (they must believe), is to give Corinth a longer visit next **winter** than would be possible if he merely sailed across at present, now that spring navigation had opened. Evidently they had expected such an immediate visit. He had indeed implied it, in this very letter, when he wrote, **I will come to you before long if the Lord wills** (iv. 19, xi. 34). But recent developments at **Ephesus** had suddenly proved so critical and promising for propaganda that he now saw no prospect of being able to leave Asia before **Pentecost,** i.e. April. The Greek word for 'door' had become a figurative term for **opportunities** or openings, and in this sense Paul uses it here as elsewhere (2 Cor. ii. 12, Col. iv. 3). **For active service** translates a Greek adjective (*energes*) which the English versions rendered 'fruitful' or 'effectual'; some early Latin texts mistook it for *enarges*, and the Vulgate version of this lingered in the Rheims 'a great door and evident.' The energy with which Paul pushed freely through the open door had roused opposition as usual. The Corinthians must realize that he could not leave his post, when so **many** were active to **thwart** the forward move. **Thwart** is the same term as he uses in the rallying cry of Phil. i. 28, **never be scared for a second by your opponents** (thwarters). 5 6 7 8 9

Grammatically the explanation of his reason for going first to Macedonia might be rendered, 'I do not now care to visit 7 you in passing,' as though he had changed his mind or as though he alluded to a previous visit in passing. He had indeed altered his original plan,[1] but this is no more than a hint of it; the place of 'now' (**at this moment**) in the sentence, close to **in the by-going,** not to **I do not care,** is against such an interpretation. Also, it is pressing the language to find a significant allusion to some quick visit paid before First Corinthians was written; in that case he would have said 'again.' **At this moment** or 'now,' as in xiii. 12 (**at present**), is in contrast with the future, not with the past. '**I do not care about seeing you at this moment,** as things now stand, for that would **merely** be a hurried visit **in the by-going.** It is really because I care for you so much that I am postponing my arrival. To put it off for some months will give us longer time together.'

'Meantime you will have a visit from Timotheus, as I have already said (iv. 17), though Apollos is unable to come at present (10–12).'

10 **When Timotheus arrives, see that you make him feel quite at home with you; he carries on the work of the Lord as I do.**
11 **So let no one disparage him. When he leaves to rejoin me, speed him cordially on his journey, for I am expecting him along with the other brothers.**
12 **As for our brother Apollos, I urged him to accompany the other brothers on a visit to you; he will come as soon as he has time, but for the present it is not the will of God that he should visit you.**

10 The Greek particle here as often (in Rom. xv. 24, 1 John iii. 2, etc.) means not 'if' but **when.** There was no doubt in Paul's mind that his younger colleague from Macedonia would reach Corinth; what was doubtful was the reception he might be given, in a church which had already been critical and even resentful of his senior's authority (iv. 17 f.). Paul bespeaks courteous treatment for one who is still on the **Lord's** business like himself—no interloper, no unauthorized visitor, to be disparaged and treated like a stranger. '**Make him feel quite at**

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[1] It is stated in 2 Cor. i. 15, 16, as Dr. Strachan shows in our Commentary (p. 66).

home, at ease, **with you,** instead of exposing him to the fear of rudeness; and not only welcome him but set him **on his** 11 **journey** back to me with hearty goodwill or **cordially**' (the literal 'in peace' fails to bring out the idiomatic warmth of the phrase). Who **the other brothers** in the party were, in addition to Erastus (Acts xix. 22), is unknown. They were to meet Timotheus at Corinth. At the moment **Apollos** could not 12 join this deputation; **it is not,** or, more literally, it is by no means **the will of God that he should visit you.** How the divine **will** overbore Paul's personal desire that he should, we do not know. It is another case of negative direction or guidance, like that of Acts xvi. 7. Literally the Greek runs, 'it is not the will,' but this is the reverential, absolute use of the term (as in Rom. ii. 18, etc.), 'the Will,' not man's but God's—a rabbinic term, afterwards employed by Ignatius. Paul's opinion had been overruled by a higher decision, which had been made plain to himself and to Apollos. The latter had once desired to visit Corinth, and his wish had been in the line of God's will. Now, for some reason, there was what moderns call 'an arrest.' Possibly the Alexandrian himself may have considered that meantime he was not called to abandon Paul when there were so many **to thwart** him on the spot. Or he may have hesitated to go back to Corinth in its troubled state, fearing he might have to disavow his own adherents. Paul seems to write as if he himself were sensitive to some possible misunderstanding on the part of the church. They must not be so suspicious as to imagine that he was indifferent to them. 'Was he not merely deferring his own visit but selfishly grudging them the pleasure of having his distinguished colleague? What was Timotheus compared to Apollos?' Paul protests that he had actually urged Apollos to sail across at once. The Corinthians, like himself, must bow to **the will of God** when personal disappointments occurred.

With this reference, Apollos passes out of the record. The later correspondence with Corinth never mentions him. But Paul's apprehension that his own change of plans might be misunderstood was unfortunately well-founded, as the tone of 2 Corinthians indicates (ii. 15 f.).

He now dictates a terse, general counsel.

13, 14 **Watch, stand firm in the faith, play the man, be strong! Let all you do be done in love.**

Whoever comes or cannot come (Phil. ii. 12), be alive
13 (xv. 34) and alert, your footing (xv. 1, 58) **firm**, amid unsettling doubts. To **play the man** was a phrase of the apostle's Greek Bible, but he alone uses it, and only here, for the moral courage needed in meeting difficulties and temptations such as those to which he has been referring (as in v. 7–13, x. 12, 13). The A.V. retained Tyndale's happy rendering, 'quit you like men.' It is an appeal for more than mature judgement (xiii. 11, xiv. 20). Although to **be strong** was in use as a term for developing the mature powers of life (as in Luke i. 80, ii. 40), Paul may be unconsciously recollecting the psalmist's phrase, 'play the man, my soul, be strong' (xxvi. 14, xxxi. 24). It is a summons for Church-life to be robust, intelligent, and loyal, with an edge on the mind and the will—anything but sentimental and easy-going. The Corinthians had been tolerant when they should have been strict, and intolerant or uncharitable when they should have been manly enough to make allowances for those who were less robust; they had not always been alive to their risks and to their responsibilities. As Paul had already hinted, the Church of God must be something other and better than a debating society or a social club or a spiritualistic circle; worship and fellowship make serious demands upon all man's faculties. Yet the very effort to uphold strong convictions, to enforce discipline, or to carry on active service, is beset by the temptation to be overbearing and impatient. Good people may be warm-hearted and loyal, yet also apt to
14 be dictatorial. Hence the next warning that all this energy must be exercised **in love**, with charitable consideration for others—much the same warning as he had dropped in his praise of love (xiii. 2) and elsewhere (viii. 1, 7–13, x. 23, 24). Paul is too wise to make the call to firmness his last word. For there is a wrong way of doing or saying the right thing. Strong characters, convinced of what they believe to be Christian

principles, may insist on their own way in a domineering, censorious spirit which defeats their very ends. It is uncharitable as it is childish, in another aspect of this attitude, to resent opposition to one's own opinions, or to take fair criticism as an insult. Let them remember that it takes a strong man to be considerate no less than to have convictions. It is in keeping with his deep stress upon love as devotion to the common welfare that he adds this sentence, **let all you do** for the good cause, in the strength of your convictions, ' all your business ' (as Tyndale renders it), **be done in** the spirit of forbearing, patient **love.** So far from being an anticlimax, this sets the four imperatives in their vital context for the Christian ethic. Again the mission-field may be drawn upon for an apt illustration. On the first of January, 1800, William Ward noted, in describing the energetic little mission settlement at Serampûr, ' This week we have adopted a new set of rules for the government of the family. All preach and pray in turn, one superintends the affairs of the family for a month, and then another. . . . Saturday evening is devoted to adjusting differences and pledging ourselves to love one another.'

With a touch of the courtesy and consideration for which he is pleading, Paul now inserts a word on behalf of some Corinthians who had been thus working for the good cause at Corinth. ' You cannot have a visit from Apollos at present, but the arrival of a man like Stephanas reminds me that you have one family among you which is at your service. Let me beg of you not to overlook them or undervalue what they are contributing.'

I ask this favour of you, my brothers. The household of Ste- 15
phanas, you know, was the first to be reaped in Achaia, and
they have laid themselves out to serve the saints. Well, 16
I want you to put yourselves under people like that, under
everyone who sets his hand to the work.

I am glad that Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus have 17
arrived, for they have made up for your absence. They 18
refresh my spirit as they do your own. You should appreciate men like that.

15 Evidently the *familia* of **Stephanas,** which by Roman usage included slaves and employees such as **Fortunatus and Achaicus** perhaps, had become a nucleus for worship, as a house-church at Corinth. A wealthy citizen would open his large room for worship, and thus serve the local Christians (verse 19). Besides, his influence and personal interest would contribute to their stability, especially if, as in this case, the whole **household** shared his religious sympathy. **The saints** need not be confined to those mentioned above (in verse 1), though Stephanas may well have had a hand in organizing the collection. He and his people were originally 'the first fruits,' **the first to be reaped** (the same term as in xv. 20, 23) in the province of **Achaia,** by which Paul probably means Corinth; otherwise we should have to suppose that Stephanas had been converted at Athens and had shifted his residence to the capital.

Laid themselves out to serve the saints, or 'addicted themselves to the ministry,' is a trade metaphor which Plato happens to use, in the *Republic* (ii. 371), about tradesmen who 'set themselves to the business of serving the public' by retailing farm produce, since they 'saw the need of this.' So the household of Stephanas had recognized that something had to be done for the good of the community and had addressed themselves to the business of voluntary, unofficial service. Paul plays on the word for **laid out** (*tassein*) by using the compound
16 (*hupotassein*) as he begs his readers to **put** themselves **under** the Stephanas group, which was putting so much personal interest into their own religious welfare. The term **to serve** (*diakonian*) belongs to the group of words from which the title of deacon emerged. These zealous Corinthians, in undertaking **the work** or **the labour of love** (1 Thess. i. 3), may have discharged some of the deacon's duties, but probably Paul realized already that the local church required some wise, firm discipline on the spot. Members who showed an aptitude for co-operating in the active work of **helpers and administrators** (xii. 28) were entitled to moral support and recognition, especially in the absence of any apostle with authority.

17 Another delicate touch of courtesy: 'I have missed you, but the arrival of these three men has "supplied" or **made**

up for your absence from myself; they are a bit of dear
Corinth.' Here, as in Philemon (20), where again he is asking 18
a favour, **refresh** means encourage or put heart into. Men
who do this kind of service for people surely deserve grateful
appreciation, as he had already told some of the Macedonian
Christians (1 Thess. v. 12).

The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Prisca, with the 19
church that meets in their house, salute you warmly in the
Lord. All the brotherhood salutes you. Salute one another 20
with a holy kiss.
I Paul write this salutation with my own hand. 'If anyone has 21, 22
no love for the Lord, God's curse be on him! Maranatha!
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with 23, 24
you all in Christ Jesus.' Amen.

For the first time in his extant correspondence, Paul appends 19
salutations from others, partly to make the Corinthians
realize that they belong to a larger Community (i. 2, xi. 16,
xiv. 36), partly to recall their tie with former members like
Aquila and Prisca, now settled in Ephesus, the capital of pro-
consular **Asia.** From them and from **all** their spiritual relatives
in the Christian **brotherhood** throughout the province he 20
conveys hearty greeting (see on Rom. xvi. 1, 5).

As the Greek term for **salute** included not only greeting but embracing, it covers the **holy kiss** on the cheek with which primitive Christians expressed their affection, as brothers and sisters of the divine Family. Paul bids the Corinthians **kiss** one another at their reunions, as a minor sacrament of fellowship, to overcome any clique-spirit. He repeated the direction later (2 Cor. xiii. 12). It is another trace of Roman social *pietas*, where the family kiss was specially stressed in the *jus osculi*. As may be seen from the allusion in 1 Pet. v. 4, this naïve custom was not confined to churches of the Pauline mission, though it does not appear to have been widespread in the second century. It was an innovation in worship which before long was introduced at baptism, much as a Roman slave was formally kissed when he was emancipated into the fellowship of the free. There is no trace of such a practice in synagogue worship, and the religious kiss of those who belonged to the cult of the charlatan Alexander, as described by Lucian (*Alexander*, 41), may have been an imitation of the Church's kiss. These adherents of Alexander were called 'those within the kiss.' According to Origen and Tertullian, the kiss was exchanged by Christians after prayers; Justin notes it as exchanged before the eucharist with the newly baptized, and this may have been one occasion for it at Corinth, unless Paul meant it to be given specially after this letter was read aloud. So long as the gatherings were small and unsophisticated, held in a home, as was the case at Corinth, the sacred kiss was a natural symbol of the intense family consciousness in Christendom. It was **holy** as practised by **the saints** (i. 2) in their simple gatherings for fellowship. 'Toute était pur dans ces saintes libertés; mais aussi qu'il fallait être pur pour pouvoir en jouir! . . . Que dire du "saint baiser," qui fut l'ambroisie de ces générations chastes, de ce baiser qui était un sacrament de force et d'amour, et dont le souvenir, mêlé aux plus graves impressions de l'acte eucharistique, suffisait durant les jours à remplir l'âme d'une sorte de parfum?' (Renan, *Marc-Aurèle*, pp. 247 f.). The direction for this **holy kiss**[1] comes (as in Rom. xvi. 16 and 1 Pet. v. 14) immediately after salutations from the outside. But it is not to be Paul's last word. Weeks had passed since he started to dictate his pastoral to Corinth. Now he paused, had the letter read over to him, and felt moved to give them a salutation from himself.

21 More than once he followed a common practice of ancient letter-writers, taking the pen from his amanuensis in order to append a special postscript in his own handwriting. This autograph, dashed down on the papyrus, is as vehement in its
22 own way as the longer one in the Galatian letter. The first of the three sentences fairly quivers with passion. **If anyone has no love,** no heart, **for the Lord,** if any member is so selfish and sensual as to prove indifferent to the Lord and

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[1] The developments of this custom are sketched in F. J. Dölger's *Antike und Christenthum*, i., pp. 118 f., and in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vii., 740 f., by A. E. Crawley.

Head of the Church, **God's curse be on him!** Twice, in warning the Galatians against disloyalty to the gospel (i. 8, 9), he uses the same stern phrase, an imprecation of doom upon anyone who dared to treat the Lord casually or coolly by laxity of belief or of conduct. The words have the cadence of an ancient curse. Literally they are 'let him be anathema,' and anathema was a Hellenistic equivalent for the Hebrew *herem*, i.e. banished from God's presence as an accursed thing; it bursts from Paul's lips in the tense cry, **I could have wished myself accursed and banished** (anathema) **from Christ,** if that would be the saving of my fellow-Israelites (Rom. ix. 3). This is the Paul who had written v. 1–5 and 13, x. 14–22, xi. 27 and 34, xv. 33–34. He has the mind of the Lord who had warned men of the fate awaiting those who might glibly call him 'Lord, Lord,' without obeying his orders. When Pascal was outraged by what he considered to be the complaisant probabilism of seventeenth-century Jesuits, who calmly discussed how often it was necessary to love the Lord, and, indeed, whether the precious blood of Christ did not exempt Christians altogether from the 'irksome obligation' of having to love God as the Jews had been required to do, he hurled this sentence of Paul against them. 'Strange theology of our days!' he sarcastically writes, in the tenth of the *Lettres Provinciales*—'You dare to set aside the anathema pronounced by St. Paul upon those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . 'Tis the mystery of iniquity fulfilled!' The popular associations of 'love' are so misleading that **love for the Lord** may not suggest what the apostle means; it is loyalty, whole-hearted devotion to him, such as is enjoined in the Sermon on the Mount—

No one can serve two masters;
either he will hate one and love the other,
or else he will stand by the one and despise the other.

This is the last of the three allusions to love for the Lord or God in the epistle (ii. 9, viii. 3), and it implies a love which **stands by** the Lord in unreserved obedience, not a dreamy emotion but a loyal, active affection. The antithesis to it is careless indifference to him, which practically amounts to disloyalty, in some cases due to an inadequate conception of what his Lordship denotes. Paul insists, as usual, that absolute devotion to him, inspired by personal gratitude, is the characteristic of all saints ; it is not a level of religious feeling which is accessible only to certain individuals of a warm temperament. His language is a vehement protest that the supreme test of membership in the Household is a devotion to the Lord which will not yield to any weak compromise ; whatever interest is allowed to overshadow allegiance to the Lord and to compete in importance with his service, rules life out of his sphere ; it is to **despise** him, and that means to reject him. Which in turn means rejection by him (iii. 17, x. 22, xi. 29, xiv. 38).

The next term is obscure and significant—obscure because its etymology is uncertain, but significant because on any interpretation it lights up one side of the inner life of the Church. The passionate ejaculation **Maranatha** is the Greek transliteration of an Aramaic cry in the primitive liturgy which begins with **mar** or Lord. So undoubtedly the first Christians understood the phrase, as Professor Dodd shows in his Commentary upon Romans (p. 167). It was retained for a while even in Greek-speaking churches, on account of its solemn associations, although few realized that it was a foreign term, any more than most people to-day are conscious that they are using Hebrew when they say Hosanna or Hallelujah or Amen. From the lips of the original Palestinian Christians **maranatha** passed, like Abba, into the prayers of the Church. In all probability it would be one of the strange terms surging up in *glossolalia*. It is the earliest expression extant of prayer to the Lord Jesus by those who **invoked** him (i. 2), this cry of the heart for his return. **Marana** is ' our Lord,' and **tha** (an abbreviated form of *atha*) means ' come.' A later prophet in Asia Minor put it into Greek (adding ' Jesus '), as a watchword of the loyal who adhered to Christ : **Lord Jesus, come** (Rev. xxii. 20). This may be the reason why Paul voices it immediately after the imprecation, as if to say, ' But we loyalists do love and invoke the risen Lord who is to come.' Such an antithesis would underlie the wording of 2 Tim. iv. 8–10, where Paul is made to contrast Demas 'who loved this present world' with faithful Christians who 'love' and long for the Lord's 'appearing.' There, as in the present passage, **love** has its Greek sense of 'prefer,' and Paul's imprecation is directed against any whose lives were a practical denial of the Lord as they preferred to rule their conduct by motives other than his. 'No place within the Church for anyone who does not put the Lord first and foremost! The Church thrills with the hope of the Lord's coming to reward his loyalists, when those who belong to him, and believe in him, shall be raised to life (xv. 23)!' Or, from another angle, 'Lord, come!' implies, 'Away with anyone who is not devoted to him as the Lord who has been raised from the dead, the one Hope of life eternal, the sole pledge of victory over death and sin! Away with anyone who is so wise that he can ignore the Lord who is God's wisdom, or who is so self-confident that he will not own his utter need of him who is God's power! Not so with us!'

Another transcription is possible, however. The term may be indicative instead of imperative. This was a fairly common view among the Church fathers. As Dölger shows, in his *Sol Salutis* (pp. 150 f.), the school of Antioch seems without question to have taken **maran atha** as 'Our Lord is come.' This is how Chrysostom explains the cry: 'Your Lord and Master has deigned to come down to you—and you still are where you were, persisting in your sins!' He means that the incarnation should fill Christians with such grateful awe and affection that they must love the Lord by shunning whatever is contrary to his presence and power. A true plea, but the form of it is more akin to the fourth century than to the first. It was in the thought of the Lord's second coming that Paul found a special stimulus to right living among his Churches; **the Lord is at hand** (in the counsel of Phil. iv. 4, 5) means the imminent arrival of the Lord rather than his spiritual presence within the Church—a truth which is expressed otherwise.

It is closer to the futuristic interpretation when some scholars explain the indicative as 'Our Lord is coming.' Dr. H. L. Strack, indeed, maintains that this is the one possible rendering of **maran atha** (as the words should be divided). The Revised Version adopted this, printing **maran atha** with 'Our Lord cometh' in the margin. Certainly it sounds more primitive than either of the two other ingenious interpretations which have been suggested: (*a*) One is that **atha** has here its meaning of standard or 'the sign,' as though love for the Lord was the distinctive sign-manual of the fellowship, and that this password or greeting accompanied the **holy kiss.** (*b*) It also seems philologically possible to take **tha** as an Aramaic equivalent for 'tau,' the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet; thus **atha** might correspond to the Grecized 'alpha and omega,' a title of the Lord in Rev. xxii. 13. As against those who were lax in their devotion to the Lord, **maranatha,** then, would protest, 'Our Lord is everything, divine and supreme in authority, the beginning and the end.'

Further light upon the context of the term in primitive worship is thrown by the Didache, a second-century manual of faith and order, from somewhere in Egypt or Syria; for, although it does not mention the **holy kiss, maranatha** occurs in a warning connexion, as here, and significantly among the final directions for the eucharist: 'May grace come and the world pass away! Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy, let him come near; if not, let him repent. Amen! Maranatha!' (x.). These may be headings of hymns to be sung at the service (and conceivably Maranatha might be 'Lord, come! grant us thy presence at our sacrament'), but more probably they are what Tertullian once called '*vota suspirantia*,' eager prayers that voice the eschatological mood of primitive Christians as they celebrated their evening sacrament, panting for the dawn of the Day. **Maranatha** in this light would be a reminder to the Corinthians to observe the rite with serious, reverent care, proclaiming thus **the Lord's death until he comes.** None but the holy or truly penitent should take part in the Lord's supper. 'Come, our Lord!' 'The Lord is coming!' 'Lord, come!'—would suit the primitive eucharist admirably as a tense ejaculation. It is not necessary to suppose that in the Didache churches, which, unlike the Corinthian, had a presiding minister at the eucharist, he called out **Maranatha,** to which the worshippers replied 'Amen.' Both may be sighs or shouts of pious fervour, as the communion service thrilled the gathering at their love-reunion.

It is further suggested that **maranatha** follows the imprecation, since Paul is reversing the synagogue's imprecation on Christians who dared to hail Jesus as their messianic Lord. If Jews were already anathematizing believers formally for confessing Christ, it would be an apt retort to declare that 'we Christians anathematize anyone who does not hold to the Lord.' Paul was himself having trouble with malignant Jews at Ephesus (Acts xx. 18–19), and the Corinthians knew that there had been bitter opposition on the part of the local synagogue when their church was born. '**Cursed be Jesus!**' was a cry familiar to them (xii. 3). **Maranatha** would in this case be a triumphant reply to the outside world: 'Our Lord is not dead, he is alive, and soon will return in triumph.' In the sixteenth century both Jewish and Christian scholars still thought that **maranatha** had been adapted from **uhram atta** (thou art excommunicated) in the solemn formula of a ban which was pronounced when the synagogue dealt with heretics. This medieval tradition explains the fact that the A.V., like all the English versions, except that of Rheims, takes 'maranatha' along with 'anathema,' or, as the Genevan Bible has it, 'let him be held in execration, yea excommunicate to death.' The interpretation is unfounded, but there may be a reference in Paul's language to the synagogue's informal practice in his own day. There is no evidence that as yet anathema represents the **arûr**, or rabbinical ban, possibly some form of excommunication or imprecation which accompanied a daily prayer like that of the twelfth of the eighteen benedictions. More probably the apostle has in mind simply the informal curses on Christian messianists. The twelfth benediction, or rather malediction, is indeed known to have been in existence by the end of the first century, and, although it is directed generally against sectaries and antinomians, its sweep certainly includes Christians and their propaganda, whether they were called Nazarenes or not. But it is not until the middle of the second century that Justin, in his *Dialogue* (96), reports this explicit imprecation upon Christians. The background of Paul's reference need be no more than the Jew's indignant curse on anyone who dared to identify the crucified Jesus with the divine messiah, especially on blasphemous followers of a renegade like Paul. Thus **Maranatha** would be a cry and a confession, exulting in the hope of the Lord coming suddenly and sharply to subdue the hostile powers of the world and to deal with the impenitent.

23 The letter then runs out in a benediction, as usual, which echoes the blessing at the beginning. Instead of conventional phrases like 'Farewell' (Acts xxiii. 30) or 'Goodbye' (Acts xv. 29), Paul adapted the latter (*chairein*) to his dominant thought of **grace** (*charis*), and struck out a fresh form of concluding his epistles.[1] Every one of his greetings at the close contains **grace.** It is one of his characteristic and original features in letter-writing. In the present case, the phrase carries on the thought of the preceding sentences, for as he prays that **the grace of the Lord Jesus** may **be with you** (who do love the Lord), he recalls the saving conviction that during this interval between the dawn of the New Age and the coming of the Lord to complete God's gracious purpose, the faithful were not left to themselves (i. 3–8). The pregnant term **grace** exhibits not only the free love to which Christians owed all that they were before God, but his active, unfailing goodwill; **the Lord** lives and loves.

24 Elsewhere this is the end of his letters to the churches. But with a sudden rush of personal affection for this dear, disappointing community, he jots down, '**my love to you all** (whether you belong to one party or another).' It is Christian love, just as the kiss is **holy,** not a conventional touch of social fellowship. He little knew that before long he would be insulted and defied by some of them! The liturgical **Amen** was added to the letter when the collection of his epistles was drawn up and edited for use in worship. In reality Paul's last word to them was the word that had chimed throughout his opening paragraph, the name of **Jesus.**

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[1] The data are collected in my *Grace in the New Testament*, pp. 141 f.

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